



**TWENTY YEARS of Swazi Kids:** What began as a few family members paying school fees for students in one rural school, has grown into something quite large. We now help about 115 students every year, 25+ of whom are at the university level. We have empowered hundreds of women, drilled wells, built homes and 7 rural community centres and an entire high school. We are extremely proud of the body of work behind us. This year's opening comments serves to shine a little light into how this has been and may continue to be for me.

Much has changed in Swaziland in the twenty years since this began. Let's begin with its name change. It is now called eSwatini. This represents the reversal of a colonized name and has, understandably, become a trend in African nations. The cities have grown and the roads in the urban areas are better. People are moving into the country, there are new homes, fancy shopping malls, some expensive cars and there are jobs. Some of these upgrades are available for the youth with post-secondary educations and some strong mentoring. However, in the rural areas, as I wrote to you last year, not much has changed at all. Kids who are unlucky enough to be born into such poverty, without a series of "leg-ups" will be destined to remain there uneducated, in mud and stick structures, on international food-aid.

This is the kind of poverty that I refer to. A child born here will not make it out without immense support.





Of course, technology has both expanded and contracted our worlds. I now online bank and transfer funds to our projects from my desk at home. Most of my students now have cell phones and can be reached at any time via text message. My first newsletter was cut and pasted actual printed pictures from an SLR camera, with handwriting and then colour photocopied. Colour photocopying was new back then. Now in 2020, I upload pics taken on my iPhone and content to a graphics person in Bulgaria. Bingo. I then send this out the jazzy full-colour PDF to each of you via email.



Over the 20 years, of course, our students have also grown up. Some of our alumni are now parents. Some are married. Many have proper careers and a few even drive cars. One of my personal favourites, who has no parents and thus no land to inherit, has now paid the local chief the necessary cows to secure his own land. He recently was out with men in his extended family fencing it.

*This is another great example of our alumni. Thembi is happily married with two children and is a full time teacher. She drove her car to join us for lunch. Love Thembi!*

Then there is the fact that much has changed for me too. I am now past the 60 year bar. Each year now I ask myself how much more time do I have at this? Each year I don't have the answer. People ask me "Who will take over after you are done?" I don't have that answer either. I am in denial, as I think the real answer is, no-one. This is a lot of work. I am not complaining, I am being honest. We have been fortunate enough that Bruce and I have been on the same page with this project. Bruce earns the lion's share of our family's income (although I have earnestly contributed also) and I donate a lot of my time and energies to Swazi Kids. Our entire family has benefited in ways that are immeasurable, not the least of which is our daughter, Thula, who is a direct product of this work.





I go back and forth on my next steps. When at home and it is off my mind, I can envision simply folding up and remaining here, with no other trips. But the fact is that the country and its people are well and truly under my skin. I love the place and in particular, I love the young people that we have helped. Through their dedication and faithful use of whatever resources we share with them, they literally have and are transforming their lives and futures. I am continually blown away by their efforts, commitment and gratitude. It has, in fact, restored some of my faith in mankind's capabilities. We in the western world are very spoiled, as you are likely aware. I see this contrast firsthand, regularly. This could make me cynical about the lifestyles, waste and wealth here, but rather, it inspires me to try and move some of that wealth from here to where it is more deeply appreciated and spun into gold. In my own small way, I am trying to level the playing field. That is what keeps me going 20 years on.



You donors, out there, have been simply amazing. There are so many of you who have been behind this effort since the very early years. Every year I send out these newsletters and combine it with something personal, or at least that is the intent, and I ask you to donate yet again. And every year you amaze me in e-transferring, Paypal-ing, or putting an old-fashioned cheque in the mail.

So, here is how all of this comes together for me. At 61, my energies are now more limited, however my heart for the work remains open. I am going to change how I approach the fundraising. What really drains me is having to ask for money. That is the hard part for me. It's not the work, I love the work, it's the "ask" that creates my fatigue. So, going forward, I will be sending out this newsletter early in the year and asking, ONCE. Just one time. There will be no re-asks in June or September anymore.



If you have enjoyed your connection with Swazi Kids and the work we do and are keen to continue, then send your cheque or use PayPal from our website NOW. (directions to donate are on the last page of this newsletter) You do so with the knowledge that I will deliver your funds into endeavours such as: new schools and community centres, kids and youth mentoring and education, health care, feeding children and help for women in real need. Thank you so much for each and every one of your commitments, large and small, you have all been so faithful to this work. It does not go unnoticed.

Best,



### Workshop, mentoring kids

Our full time employee, Joseph Aryee, runs monthly mentoring workshops with selected groups of our rural and city students. They cover such topics as: children and women's rights, normal family structure, study habits, career options, goal setting, HIV prevention, sexual abuse, domestic violence, incest and the law, nutrition and personal hygiene. This has been an enormous development in our program, since the hiring of Joe fulltime. With such a broken and unwell family structure prevailing in this country, the impact of this lifeline can't be measured. I would like to thank the men and women of Leith Wheeler Investments for raising the funds for Joe's annual salary.



### Pam at the National Care Point Center

2020 will see an significant upgrade in food for these children plus monthly visits from nurses and health care professionals. Many are showing signs of developmental delays and autism, we are trying for some early intervention. A veggie garden is also planned. If a trip of women from Canada emerges, we will go and build these tikes and their care providers a new kitchen from which to prepare better food.





## Pam and Joe check on health and hygiene in the rural areas

As part of our increased initiatives in the rural areas, Joe is making visits to the homesteads to discuss basics such as personal hygiene and the regular bathing of children. We also treat the kids at school for ringworm on a regular basis.



### Mancoba's eyes

By taking this boy, Mancoba, to the ophthalmologist, it was discovered that he lost the use of one eye due to injury, as a young boy. It was completely undiagnosed. We have now supplied him with eyewear to protect his good eye when doing sports. Another young man, who has struggled mightily in school, it has been discovered has been HIV since birth. From the AIDS his corneas are badly damaged and his vision is now reduced to perhaps 25%. We are supporting him to complete high school and planning career training for the visually impaired. Since we have embraced him with his condition, he has a new lease on life. Not pictured here due to confidentiality.



## Ncamiso at work

Here is one of my favourite examples of a student that has well and truly taken our help and spun it into gold. Many of you heard him speak in the summer of 2018, when he came to Canada. I see Ncamiso often in his, now well established, career as a quantity surveyor. Recently, I dropped by to see him at the office. I laughed out loud, as I had to go by way of receptionist and have him paged to meet me downstairs. I can't even go directly to see my "own son" anymore, he is now so important. Ncamiso also have a company vehicle with the option to purchase over time.







## 2019 Uni Graduates photo

We held another party for our recent grads from universities and colleges. Grads and up and coming students were invited. Our young adults are also great public speakers, as several were chosen to speak and motivate the others.



## And then there is all the regular work.

Paying school fees, monthly stipends for our tertiary students, meeting with parents, care givers, teachers to assess extra needs and bring in new students. In 2020 we will support 90 kids at elementary and secondary schools and 25+ at the post-secondary level.





2020 build project elementary school foundation • Nhlanhla meets his sponsors • Preschoolers get new supplies



## YEAR SPONSORS

Wheeler Family Foundation, Eileen, Bill & family

D. Ash Foundation, Lise and David

ML Henley Foundation, Louie

Riviere Trust, Lydia Luckevich

Susan Alexander

Jim and Sarah Armstrong

Peter Ballard

Judith and Heather Bisiker

Deanne Buller

David Burt

Nancy Carlson

Jessie Carlson

Eva DiCasmirro

Brenda Focht

Rusty and Lindy Goepel

Ed Goertz

Keith Hamilton and Sally Fisher

Danielle and John Heine

Ross McDonald

Sheila Martindale

Andrew and Andrea Martindale

Gary Matich

David and Michelle Newton

Heidi Newton

Ken and Cathy Owens

Kelowna Roofing, Pauline and Reg Keilty

Jane Lister

Susie and John McIntyre

Constance Olsheski and Tom Neuendorff

Wendy and Bud Patel

Lori and Gary Prince

John and Kat Robb

Heide and Al Saunders

Judy and Wil Tranter

Lyle and Annette Whittemore

## Reach Out!

Our ongoing efforts to improve the lives of children in Swaziland require significant funds. If you wish to make a contribution make sure to fill out our **Ways To Help Swazi Kids 2020** form.



**Any more questions, just ask!**

**1-250-309-2522**

**swazikids@gmail.com**

**Swazi Kids**  
4415 Swaisland Rd,  
Kelowna, BC, V1W 2X2  
Canada