



AUGUST 2023

Greetings to our sponsors old and new.

I am living in Eswatini again. Bruce and I decided that living here for a chunk of time would be in the best interest of our adopted daughter, Thula. We return to Canada for school holidays twice each year and we do not know for how long this will run. But living here again offers many benefits to Swazi Kids. Our employee, Joe and I, get plenty of high-quality time together. We visit students who are working in remote corners of the country, we brainstorm ideas, I oversee workshops with our students at all levels and we site new building projects, to name a few.

At a glance, the country would appear to be doing well, as it economically crawls out of the affects of the lockdown measures of Covid, if one just drove through the wealthier areas. People once again seem to be moving into Eswatini. There is a large new private medical center, not far from where we are living. There are new shops and petrol stations. I recently discovered the very first excellent coffee shop! (a huge upgrade) Increasingly there are fancy cars with poor first-generation drivers on the roads. They even finally installed some tall streetlights on the very dangerous Malagwane highway to Mbabane. Young women in town are be-decaled with modern and western looking clothing, high heels, and mega hairstyles. The wealthy throw lavish parties for birthdays, weddings and even baby gender reveal events complete with helium balloons and pink or blue cakes.



However, just drive about 10 km in any direction and the story remains the same. The women are still running things out there, often grannies as their children died during the AIDs epidemic. The AIDS kids have grown up, by the grace of NGO's like ours a few have made it out of the rural areas. The nearly two years of locking kids out of schools here, has cost many children their entire educational lives, or they are desperately behind where they ought to be. As beautiful and quaint and "originally African" these stone and mud huts with thatched rooves are, this is no place to get ahead and advance one's family status. Many families still do not have electricity and most have no plumbing, some have livestock and none have cars. This is where Swazi Kids' work resides. Our aim is to move these young people into higher education and thus into the path of opportunities.



As most of you know, we have succeeded, many times over. However, it might be interesting yet difficult for you to know that even once these young adults have made it, its not always all roses at home! When these graduates advance themselves and earn an actual income, this often creates jealousies amongst family members. Siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles all line up around that

successful scholar to take what they see as their share. They make efforts to denigrate, belittle, tease, and otherwise undermine their success. In one case there was even theft and the deliberate destruction of a business. This forces our lovely young adults to find other ways to relate to their own families. This is heart breaking and it is inevitable. After some shock, awe, and sadness, they create new pathways. Some find other places to begin to set up their own homesteads, on rare occasions relationships break down, but still in all cases, they do not forget their roots, they still share with their families. This could take the form of paying school fees for a younger sibling or building their parents a new structure of blocks, which is a big upgrade from stone and mud. They all return for holidays bearing gifts, often meat for a big meal. None relinquish their hard work; all find new ways to be with their families and they do journey on.

I have just learned in more detail of these issues running in the background recently, it broke my heart to know this. But I have been counselled by Joe, who has been through this himself, that this is all part of it. Our young adults, to continue to succeed, must find their own way. This is another wonderful aspect of what Joe brings to Swazi Kids, his personal life and experience.



THE CIVIL UNREST

All is quiet these days. The King held one of his ritual corral meetings last week. These are called Sibeya and culturally are a time for the leader to listen to and speak with his people. They are usually well attended. However, Joe and I were on the roads that day and noticed the trucks returning with mostly men from the rural areas and the trucks were only 10% full. All standing on the flat bed, these trucks usually hold at least 50-75 people for big events. Make of that what you will. I am just the messenger. We do not know if the protests are over for now or for a generation. We do know that no concessions were made by the King for any of their demands, hopes and dreams!



FEATURED STUDENTS:



Male:

Ndumiso: Recently we visited this young man in his position as an electrician for heavy equipment. He is visually impaired, and his journey has not been a straight line, but he hung in there and we did too. It lifted my spirits mightily to see him under a massive tractor doing his job. It looks good that this mentorship could translate into a real job in a few months.



2007



2023

Female:

Nolwazi is a student of ours from Kaphunga that goes back about twenty years. Her journey has also not been a straight shot. Having shown strong promise as a younger student. She completed high school in 2014, but for a series of reasons, in her final years she faltered and finished with weak grades. She was unable to go onto college or uni. She subsequently fell pregnant and

had a baby girl in 2017. In 2019, she approached Swazi Kids for a 2nd chance. We supported her to upgrade, by redoing her final two years at high school. She came through those 2 years, at the age of 24, with flying colours. And she has since completed a two-year program qualifying her as Veterinary Assistant. She is now awaiting a posting with the Ministry of Agriculture. These young women rebound and are so strong!

GRADUATION ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

We have just launched our Graduation Enhancement Programme. This is aimed at increasing the employability of our graduating students. We will bring in local experts in the following areas to work with our young adults:

- career coaching session and job search
- how to effectively apply and interview for employment
- personal grooming/etiquette
- add-on computer skills in Excel, Word and PowerPoint
- personal budgeting and finances

Empowering our graduates with these tools will produce more employable candidates with the competence and confidence they need to become assets to their employers and increased job security. Joe and I are excited about what we see as real value added to our kids graduating packages!



**Something
NEW!**



EMNOTFWENI SECONDARY SCHOOL & BRENTWOOD RETURNS 2024

Twenty-six Brentwood College students plus three teachers, who have built this school up from the ground, are returning to Eswatini in March 2024. With their fundraising help and man/woman power we will erect a 2-room classroom block with an attached school library. We are repeating the success of the library we built last year at Matjana Elementary. See here pics of a recent structure we built, a Consumer Sciences building that is massive. It instructs in cooking, laundry and sewing. This pic shows the stoves just delivered.



MENTORING FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS:

Our mentoring sessions are back to normal since there is some peace and stability in the country. We have students travelling from their rural schools to the city. We had sessions in Pam's rented house at the Mandela's enclave among other venues. This was an exciting experience for the students since they have been looking forward to the travels to the city. We have also had some of our older

students in the post-secondary level coming to share their life experiences, some traumatic events and how they have persevered to achieve their academic and life goals. This aspect of the program has really been inspirational to the younger students.

MR MAMBA'S NEW SCHOOL, EMPHINI PRIMARY

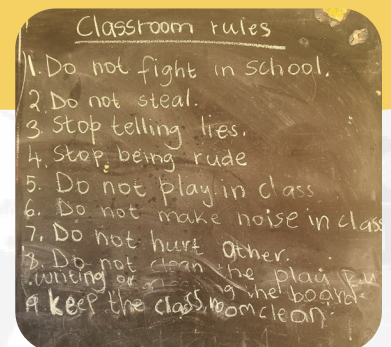
We have been introduced to a new school that we think we will bring under our wing. It is a rural school that in its heyday had 600 students, it is very large. Its student population has dwindled to half. The bones are good, but it would appear to have been mismanaged or perhaps un-managed for many years. It is in very rough condition, in need of TLC everywhere. The teachers' houses are equally awful. We estimate that \$10,000 Cad could go a very long way.

The needs list:

- new windows and doors nearly everywhere
- concrete floor repair
- roofing on some buildings not all
- proper drainage around the lower buildings, that have been flooded
- a proper designated working space for the head of school, see the pic of her working space!
- plenty of garbage removal



Please feel free to donate to this very worthy cause, denominations of \$100 would be really appreciated!



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Ways to Help Swazi Kids 2023

I wish to help out in the following way(s)
Please fill in the appropriate blanks

An elementary student is helped in various ways and \$200 per year goes a very long way, (but does not get them a new uniform):

I would like to help _____

Our secondary students need \$500-750 per year, this is due in large part to expensive exam fees and uniforms:

I would like to help _____

Uniform \$175 _____

A new desk for the library \$50 _____

5 text books for new library \$50 _____

10 novels for new library \$100 _____

Help us with the new library, in increments of \$100

Graduation Enhancement Program

\$350 will get one of our grads through this new program and onto employment

Use my funds as you see fit for Swazi Kids work:

METHODS OF DONATING

1. Using credit card or Paypal, directly from our website. If this is your method, cut and paste this URL address into your address bar on your search engine; <https://swazikids.net/donate> It will take you to our donate page, which is a self-serve method of easy payment using your credit card or Paypal
2. If sending via an e-transfer, please use email address: swazikids@gmail.com and use password: swazikids
3. Please make donation cheques payable to Swazi Kids Society and post the cheque along with this form

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