



2025 SUMMER-FALL

NEWSLETTER



Graduation Enhancement Program: Building Confidence for the Future.

A few years ago, the idea of a mentoring program for SwaziKids graduates was first suggested. At the time, it seemed like a good idea, but no one could have predicted how vital it would become. Over the past two years, that vision has taken root through the work of Joe Aryee and various student graduates whose efforts are helping young men and women make the difficult transition from post secondary into the wider world of work and independence.

Joe has organized three Saturday workshops in Mbabane, each focusing on practical and emotional preparation for employment. The goal is simple but crucial: to help graduates develop interview skills, build self-confidence, and begin their adult lives with greater resilience.

From the very first session, three key realities stood out.

- First:** employment opportunities in Eswatini are scarce, and competition is intense.
- Second:** many of our students feel intimidated and unprepared for life in the “big cities” where jobs are found.
- Third:** cultural expectations often work against them. In Swazi culture, young people are raised to be quiet, deferential, and to speak only when spoken to. These qualities make them kind, respectful, and pleasant to be around—but they can also make it difficult to project the confidence and assertiveness that employers look for.

During role-playing interviews, these cultural barriers became clear. Students struggled with skills as simple as maintaining eye contact, offering a firm handshake, speaking audibly, and asking questions. For them, a strong voice feels impolite, even pushy. Many also come from rural or broken homes, raised by grandparents, step-parents, aunts, or siblings. Against this backdrop, it is easy for them to feel “less than” compared to their urban peers.

And yet, despite these challenges, the students in the Graduation Enhancement Program are among the best Swazi Kids has supported. Year after year, they have achieved top marks, and many have gone on to trade schools and special training programs. Their intellect and dedication are clear. What they need now is confidence—the belief that they can take those skills into the world and succeed.

To help build this, the final workshop took a different approach. Each student was asked to prepare a short two-minute speech on any topic of their choice. Public speaking is famously one of people’s greatest fears, yet eleven students stood up to the challenge. What happened next was remarkable.



One after another, they spoke without notes—clear, strong, and heartfelt. Some shared personal stories:

- learning to cook from a grandparent
- baking and selling goods
- surviving stage three cancer
- discovering a love for literature and music

Others spoke about perseverance, showing up, and never giving up. All were nervous at first, but as they spoke, their voices grew steadier, their posture stronger, and their confidence visible. Some spoke for much longer than the two minutes—up to nine minutes—because once they found their voice, they had something important to say. There was laughter, there were tears, and above all, there was pride.



That day, something shifted. Confidence and character are not built overnight—they come in small steps, earned through effort and courage. But in that session, every student took a step forward, proving to themselves and each other that they could rise to the moment.

The program is already bearing fruit. Of the current group:

- 5 students have secured internships
- 5 are employed
- 4 have launched business start-ups with support from SwaziKids

For young people facing so many barriers, these are significant achievements. More importantly, they are learning the most vital lesson of all: to believe in themselves. The Graduation Enhancement Program is helping them not only gain practical skills but also discover the courage, character, and confidence they need to create a future of their own making.

by Bruce Carlson

(the president's husband) who crafted and taught some of these sessions described above.

Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) Grant Awarded

With the encouragement of our director, Sean Wheeler, Swazi Kids met with a Canadian government representative at the High Commission in Maputo, Mozambique. From that meeting, Joe and I were inspired to apply for federal funding for a new project—and we are thrilled to announce that Swazi Kids has been awarded its first-ever Canadian Government Grant.

This grant will support the construction of six small homes for women in Eswatini who have survived gender-based violence. Currently, there are no government services, shelters, or safe spaces available for victims of such violence in the country.

Our inspiration came through working alongside Gosheen, an outstanding grassroots organization that provides emergency shelter, food, child and maternal care, education, and training for women and girls in crisis. Swazi Kids will complement their efforts by acquiring land adjacent to their premises, where we will build tiny homes, a shared well, and outhouses. In addition, we will provide ongoing, advanced support to help the women rebuild their lives.

To further strengthen the project, we are also constructing a poultry barn to support food security and help Gosheen's programs move toward greater self-sufficiency.



Joe and Nosipho discuss poultry barn



Build supported by CFLI in 2024, Gosheen



Gosheen, where the homes for women will be built

Graduation

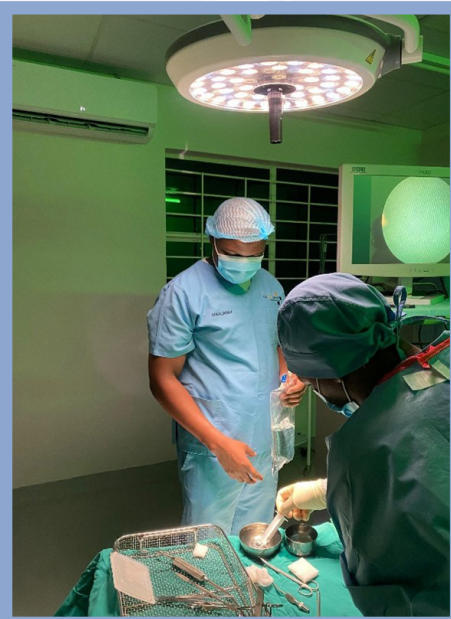
We recently celebrated the achievements of our students who have graduated since 2021. It was an afternoon filled with excitement and pride as we honoured these remarkable young people who have overcome many challenges to reach this milestone.

This moment represents the ultimate goal of our program—seeing our students succeed and step into their future with confidence. Some graduates even arrived in their official work uniforms and cars, proudly sharing their journeys. Many spoke about how they could not have reached this point without the support and generosity of Swazi Kids.



Highlights from our graduation celebration!

Our featured graduates:



Mxolisi Simelane, a nurse/midwife on duty at the Hospital



Wandile Shabangu on his robotic program in elementary and secondary schools



Temancube Mlangeni at her internship worksite as an electrical engineer

Library at Emphini Elementary



After our renovation project at Emphini elementary school, we embarked on setting up a library in the school to encourage reading and improving the language skills among the learners. We renovated the structure, provided furniture and some books. There was great excitement when the learners entered the library for the first time to pick up a book to read during their library period.



Swazi Kids

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Ways to Help Swazi Kids 2025

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 _____

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.org/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

Swazi Kids Society
4531 Gaspardone Rd,
Kelowna, BC,
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Does a service trip to Eswatini interest you?

I guide groups ranging from 6-30 people in Eswatini. The trip can be quite customized to suit the group. Couples, singles, families, extended families, friends are all welcome. I have done this many times and can provide great contacts from happy previous travellers and testimonials. I know Eswatini like the back of my hand. The trips are usually 2 weeks long and include: service with children/building (no skills required), sight-seeing, hiking (all abilities accepted) and an amazing safari.

There is also a phenomenal music festival down here, called Bush-Fire. bush-fire.com and facebook.com/MTNBUSHFIRE and I look forward to bringing a group that could incorporate this! Costs range from about \$5,000-\$7,250 per person depending upon the level of safari, this does not include airfare.

Watch videos from the Bushfire festival:

[Video 1](#)

[Video 2](#)

[Video 3](#)

[Video 4](#)

[Video 5](#)



Contact me, Pam Carlson, for more information on my trips: [**Pambigdog3@gmail.com**](mailto:Pambigdog3@gmail.com)



Note that for liability reasons, my trips are run by a separate entity, called Jacaranda Journeys and although my connection is to Swazi Kids, the trips are not. However, we work on and view many of Swazi Kids projects and we engage with students younger and older from our program.