

Ridgemont High School

Four years ago, Mai-lin Tsou, a Grade 10 student at Ridgemont High School in Ottawa decided that she wanted to get involved with one of HelpLesotho's programs. She learned from her mother, Kathleen Lauder, about the possibility of twinning Ridgemont High with a Lesotho high school. She engaged the help of her friend Lisa Quach, and two teachers, Nancy Fraser and Carol Seymour to form the Help Lesotho club. In school years 04/05 and 05/06 they organized fundraising events, which included garage sales, car washes and fashion shows.

Mai-lin was killed in a car accident in August of 2006 but her legacy lives on today. For the past two years, teachers Ruth McKeague and Ingrid Ermanovics have taken up the cause and led Ridgemont's HelpLesotho (HL) club.

Ridgemont's teachers and students have added some new fundraising activities:

Concert and dinner fundraiser

In October 2006, taking advantage of its 500 seat-auditorium, the HL club hosted a HelpLesotho event featuring Ha!Man, a South African musical entertainer. The event was repeated in 2007 event with a dinner added prior to the concert. Kathleen Lauder, Mai-lin Tsou's mother, obtained free food donations from a number of restaurants to create an international dinner (\$20 per dinner served). Forty Ridgemont students decorated the cafeteria, worked as servers, and made place mats. Outside the cafeteria, in the school main lobby were HL information displays and items for sale. For example, book marks were sold as a memorial to Mai-lin Tsou. Two hundred

people attended the dinner and an additional 200 attended the concert—\$15,000 was raised all together, from ticket sales, the dinner, and donations — all of which went towards the construction of a dormitory at Bokoro school.

Cafeteria ceiling tile painting contest

This event was a spring activity in 2007. For an entry fee of \$10 per tile, school clubs or individuals could paint a tile as a school spirit building and HL awareness activity. Over a 3 week period, the twelve entrants had access to the art room during the noon hour to paint their tiles. Their tiles were displayed in the school lobby for a day, and 300 students voted anonymously for their favourite. The tiles were placed in the cafeteria ceiling. It was a simple and well-received event that raised \$120.



Barbeque

This was not your standard barbeque held on school grounds. First, this was held at a nearby Rogers Independent Grocery Store that attracted those from the public. Second, the store's manager provided not only free hot dogs buns, but also a \$100 gift certificate, half of which was used to buy soft drinks, condiments, cups and other supplies needed for the event. Student enthusiasm despite the cold and windy day resulted in more people becoming aware of Lesotho and also raised \$150.

For 2008, Ridgemont's HL club plans to repeat these three

events. In addition, Ridgemont's Character Committee has also scheduled the motivational speaker, Mawi Agsedom. Ridgemont's students will be reading Agsedom's book, *Beetles and Angels*. His family fled Ethiopia and stayed in a refugee camp before making it to the United States where they started off in poverty. Now a Harvard graduate, guest on Oprah, and motivational speaker Mr. Agsedom will speak at Ridgemont in March. Six hundred copies of his book will be made available to staff and students for only \$2 with all proceeds going to Help Lesotho's twinned school.

Other activities and comments

In February 2008, Kathleen Lauder took a colourful banner entitled "Learning in Friendship" by Ridgemont High School students to Bokoro. It represents a lasting reminder of the connection to Ridgemont students in Canada and is hoped to be a welcome addition to the school's decor.



Kathleen will bring back letters from the students. Teacher volunteers, typically the English and ESL teachers, will have their classes reply to the letters as a class project.

Approximately 70 cultural groups are represented at Ridgemont. Some of the students have come from refugee camps as recent immigrants to Canada; some are dealing with difficult circumstances; some students looking after siblings. Thus, they can relate to some of the

Editor's Note: Issue 2 is coming out before Issue 1. Issue 2 has had the advantage of being produced using Microsoft Publisher.

Issue 1 will be put into Publisher and then distributed.

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challenges facing their Lesotho counterparts. When the school received the pictures of the dormitory construction for which students had raised fund for it immediately struck a chord.

The teacher coordinators, Ruth and Ingrid, do face a challenge, however. Students typically do not stay after school, so the weekly HL club meetings are held on Thursday at noon. As such, it is in competition with other clubs and sports practices. And, since attendance is voluntary, it is difficult to predict how many students will attend and what can be accomplished. When students demonstrate leadership and propose an idea, however, Ruth and Ingrid encourage them to "run with it".

Riverview Public School



Environmental Fair



Similar type of painted shoe used to collect pennies, nickels and dimes.

M'e' Ana said that "teachers and students were determined to work hard ... this new motivation came from the twinning support they have received".

Riverview has the distinction of being one of the public school in Canada to be twinned with a school in Lesotho, Bokoro Public School. It unofficially started in 2004 when Dr. Peg Herbert spoke to the Riverview Staff and then it gained momentum the next year when she and Carolyn Kennedy presented slides and spoke at an assembly about Lesotho. The school's involvement with Bokoro has been strong to this day. In fact the first students to lead the project are now in grade 8 at Alta Vista School and continue to write their pen pals and support Riverview projects.

The Green Team Events

Teacher Beth Stubbett's "green team", made up of volunteer students from grades 2-6, fundraises and educates within the school on HelpLesotho and Earthcare initiatives. The green team usually meetings every Friday from 11:10 to 11:40 during a morning break. [Riverview has a balanced day made up of a morning and afternoon nutrition and outdoor play times.]

An *Environmental Fair* for Bokoro Primary has been held the last two years, and will be held again in April, 2008. Due to the popular environmental games, and bake goods and crafts for sale the event tends to raise over \$1,000. [For details on the environmental games, and a list of

fun and simple crafts that can be made contact Beth Stubbett].



The green team has organized other things as well. *Footprints to Bokoro*, that started in the Fall, 2007, displays footprints on the Riverview/Bokoro bulletin board to keep track of fundraising activities. In October each class collects pennies nickels and dimes in colourfully painted used shoes.

A Riverview banner, filled with photos, painted messages of cheer and all the students signatures was sent in June 2007. Gary Branch, a teacher from New Brunswick volunteered at Bokoro school last August and sent photos of the staff and children proudly holding the banner. The banner runs along the top of the walls and is a constant reminder of Riverview's support.



Banner up at Bokoro Primary

Riverview's support, ongoing pen pal communications, and perhaps

Gary Branch's influence has recently led to 6 out of the top 10 Standard 7 exam results (nationwide) coming from Bokoro. Via a communication from Carolyn M'e' Ana said that "teachers and students were determined to work hard ... this new motivation came from the twinning support they have received".

Through the HelpLesotho showcase; a display with artefacts and education material, and Carolyn's communications and slide presentations the students are asking more and more questions. They appear to be demonstrating a growing sensitivity.

Other Activities for 2008:

- "Bake sale for Bokoro", Friday, Feb 1. and Feb. 22
- Flag day, Feb 15, each class will sign a small Canadian flag to send with pen pal letters.
- Riverview will welcome Mampoi, a new HelpLesotho employee from Lesotho, to speak to the students on March 7.
- An April assembly to welcome Carolyn Kennedy –slides and talk
- Beth will co-ordinate the distribution of pen pal letters that have been received from Bokoro to classes in Riverview
- Continue filling painted shoes in June and next fall

Bishop Hamilton Schools

Students, parents and staff at Bishop Hamilton Schools are dedicated in supporting Malekefane in various initiatives. Bishop Hamilton has two schools in the Ottawa area that combine their fundraising efforts, one that goes to grade 3 (80 students) and one that goes to grade 8 (260 students).

During the year 2007 the children were enthusiastic about raising funds for our twinned school in Lesotho. There was themed dress up days throughout the year, the students had a Christmas craft

fair where they made and sold braided hangers, Christmas cards, and woven bracelets. They also organised a spring fair with more crafts, crepes and great baked treats. At the end of the year they had five separate 'smoothie sales' which were all natural fruit drinks with no sugar added! Lesotho calendars were sold throughout the year in coordination with these various activities.

The money we raised was deposited into a bank account and it served as a learning tool about interest rates.

The year 2008 is in the early stages of planning. We have an enthusiastic parent who recently agreed to take on this exciting challenge. The staff is involved in 'jeans Fridays for Lesotho'.



Elmwood School

What do you get when you take a group of 30 motivated girls and a new teacher co-ordinator – lots of great ideas, teamwork, and drive to see results. The Amnesty HelpLesotho group (AHL) would like to see the 2007-2008 school year a success for both fundraising and awareness.



The Fall's fundraiser, the 2008 calendars was a huge success thanks to the wonderful participation of parents, staff, and students. Available at parent/teacher interviews and via a communication that was sent home 176 calendars were sold and \$2112 raised.

February/March Fundraising Events

After some brainstorming and planning sessions in January the girls have now promoted and are

executing some activities for February and March. In February it will be the sale of candy kabobs, every Friday at lunch (candy bought in bulk and put on skewers, um yummy! \$2 for 1, \$5 for 3).



Can you spare some change? The "Project Change" program will occur in March which has been designated advocacy month at Elmwood.

Fourteen teachers have signed up with two crazy pledges each. Teachers made one pledge if we raise 250 \$ and a different and crazier pledge if we raise 500 \$. Pledges include anything from dying their hair, wearing the school uniform and being silent for a day.

Club members will collect loose change during the week of March

24- 28th. The final amount will be tallied up and the amount raised will be disclosed to students and staff Friday afternoon. April 1st, April Fool's Day teachers will showcase their pledges all day and in a special presentation in the auditorium at lunch. If 250 \$ was raised teachers will do their first pledge, and if 500\$ teachers will do their second pledge. Teachers involved in the pledge will also perform a dance number from Hairspray or High School Musical.

To promote Project change AHL members will create posters with teachers' picture and pledges and a video clip dictating teacher pledges in assembly.

Other Activities and Awareness

The AHL club tries to seek a balance between fundraising and awareness/education of the important causes. During the month of March, Elmwood's advocacy month, members hope to education the student body on the needs and challenges in Lesotho.

During the months of April and May, AHL club members will coordinate a Homeroom Project in

order to strengthen Elmwood's connection to their sister school St Charles. Each Middle and Senior School Homeroom will focus on a certain age group and create a special package to send over to Lesotho. This package may include letters, drawings, photographs, poems etc. St Charles principal, Sister Alice, will distribute the packages to the age appropriate classes for the students to enjoy. If St. Charles age "groups" wish to respond that would be great but the Elmwood homerooms would be choosing to create their packages with the enjoyment of doing the activity without the expectation to receive anything in return.



St. Charles H.S Aids Club

Corpus Christi Catholic School

(by Cindy May)

The Help Lesotho/Corpus Christi partnership began in the 2005-2006 school year under the parent leadership of Jane Spiteri (our present Parent Council co-chair). Over the past three years and together with the school administration, Parent Council has worked to increase global awareness in our own community and to raise funds for schools in Lesotho.

In June of 2007, Corpus Christi was twinned with Katlehong School. All Corpus Christi students (Kindergarten to Grade Six) have had the opportunity to participate in our pen-pal pro-

gram with Katlehong School. The youngest children in our school contributed beautiful illustrations that were included in pen-pal letters written by older students. In turn, the students were inspired by the letters they received from pen pals in Lesotho.

Over the last three years, our primary Help Lesotho fundraising initiative has been our yearly Help Lesotho Advent Project. The Advent Project includes a *Coin Drive*, sales of Help Lesotho calendars and the sale of crafts/cards made by Corpus Christi students. As well, the teachers have spear-headed a staff "gifts in lieu" program, whereby families who would have otherwise purchased a small

gift at Christmas for the classroom teacher are encouraged to donate this money instead to Help Lesotho.

In the 2005-2006 school year Corpus Christi raised \$4,700, enough to put a much-needed new roof on Mahlekefane School! In 2006-2007, Corpus Christi raised over \$6,000 to help Bokoro Primary School with infrastructure repairs, bookshelves, writing boards, benches and basic school supplies. This year, under the administrative leadership of the school Principal, Monica Kerwin, the staff leadership of Triona White and her wonderful grade six class and the parent leadership of Cindy May and Claire Kendall, Corpus Christi raised over \$5,500 to assist our twin school, Katlehong.

Our school community is so excited about the connection to our twin

school in Lesotho. This connection, strengthened by the pen pal letters being sent and received, is helping our students understand one of our central beliefs as Christians: that we are all global neighbours. We enjoyed an excellent PowerPoint presentation by Help Lesotho board member Jennifer Parr that helped us to launch this year's Advent Project. We have also benefited from a number of visits from Carolyn Kennedy. We are all looking forward to learning more about life in Lesotho when Mampoi comes to visit us on March 7 at 1:30.



Katlehong Primary School

Rockcliffe Park Public School

It is interesting how things get started. Being friends in a book club (Dr. Peg Herbert and a Rockcliffe P.S. parent) lead to Peg making a presentation to the Principal and then the School Council. Consequently, in the Fall of 2004 Rockcliffe started to twin with Guardian Angels Public School.

The HelpLesotho projects at Rockcliffe are spearheaded by a parent volunteer, Alison Wesley-James. Alison utilizes other parent volunteers via a process at Rockcliffe whereby parents indicate at the start of each school year how they want to volunteer at the school. Some select HelpLesotho.

Annual Book Fair

For over 46 years Rockcliffe Public School has hosted, in November, a huge book fair. With support and encouragement from the Principal HelpLesotho fundraising piggybacks onto the book fair initiative. This started at the November 2003 book fair and has continued each year.

At the book fair, which runs Friday through Sunday, volunteer students mingle amongst the patrons encouraging them to deposit their loose change into brightly decorated jars. In return the patrons receive a HelpLesotho thank you sticker. The stickers are decorated by all the grades at Rockcliffe prior to the event.

Each year over \$1,000 dollars is raised for Guardian Angels via this initiative.

This money raised has supported the students at Guardian Angels in various ways including the establishment of a library, the purchase of winter clothing and school uniforms, and the purchase of a cow (which turned into two ... she was pregnant).

Forgoing Birthday Presents

Starting in January 2007 this fundraising activity was launched. Spearheaded by a parent volunteer parents pay \$20 for a birthday party package which includes 10 invitations (in an African style) and three cards. The child selects which three invitees will

receive the cards. The card requests the child/parent to forgo giving a birthday present and instead make a donation to HelpLesotho. To date this initiative has raised \$2,000 dollars. For other schools wanting to start this initiative the parent volunteer would be happy to share their secrets on how to successfully launch and manage it. Also, there are some photos, information, and a sample "certificate" on the HelpLesotho website.

Pen Pals

From the start the pen pals activity has been a success. Many students have exchanged letters, drawings, photos, stickers and so on for close to five years now. Some have continued on after leaving Rockcliffe upon their own initiative.

Awareness Activities

Alison maintains the display boards within Rockcliffe. These boards promote events to come and celebrate completed and ongoing activities. Currently the boards have information about

the 650 toothbrushes recently sent over to Guardian Angels students, and updates on the two children the school sponsors at the Bytown Orphanage. Another parent volunteer coordinates the newsletter sent to parents two to three times per year.

Activities for 2008

March: Rockcliffe will welcome Mampoi to speak to the students and staff. At this time Alison will get input from Mampoi for Rockcliffe's April participatory event.

April: Participatory Event; student volunteers will learn hand drumming; dress up in Lesotho clothes; or act out the "day in the life" of Lesotho children at an assembly

November: Annual Book Fair

Other: Occasionally certain grades or classes take the initiative to host an event (for example a bake sale on a parent/teacher evening) to raise money for HelpLesotho.

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School

(by Cindy May)

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School has been a Helping Hands School partnered with Help Lesotho since 2006. Our annual St. Thomas Aquinas Help Lesotho fundraising efforts take two distinct forms: Grads Helping Grads, and a school wide coin drive.

Grads Helping Grads, organized by staff members Kathy Mack and Helen Zurawski, is an ongoing effort throughout the school

year, in which the students of the Grade 12 graduating class at St. Thomas Aquinas organize a series of events to raise a minimum of \$1600, to cover the high school tuition and boarding costs of two high school seniors in Lesotho.

In the 2006-2007 school year, Grads Helping Grads raised \$1522, enabling two twin girls, Ntati Mary Lesala and Nthatisi Lesala, to complete their final year of high school at Paray High in Lesotho. This year, the graduating class at St. Thomas

Aquinas is excited to be assisting two students from Khethisa High School. Kekeletso is an 18 year old student in his final year at Khethisa. He is a very bright student who always achieves at the top of his class. Ntebohelen is also 18 years old, she studies hard and hopes to be an accountant.

This year, Grads Helping Grads has already raised over \$600, they are on track to surpass last year's total!!

The second St. Thomas Aquinas fundraising initiative for Help Lesotho is

an annual school wide coin drive, organized by staff members Lori-Ann Zylstra and Cindy May.

Last year the campaign was part of our school Advent Project, and was a huge success, with over \$3000 in loose change donated!! This year the Help Lesotho St. Thomas Aquinas Coin Drive took place during Lent. It is still running as this article is being written; we appreciate the great involvement and effort of our school community and look forward to another great result!

Lesotho and the Schools Helping Schools Program

Lesotho has the 3rd highest incidence of HIV/AIDS in the world leaving over 30% of children orphaned and many more vulnerable. As schools in Lesotho are required to become the primary care unit for many children, Help Lesotho aims to support those in need through local schools and communities. We welcome the involvement of classes, clubs, grades, and schools. There are currently 14 schools across Canada twinned with a school in Lesotho and many additional schools are raising funds to help schools in Lesotho through the Schools Helping Schools Program. For more information on how to involve your school please visit www.helplesotho.ca or email schools@helplesotho.ca.



Challenges Facing Children

- Many students have to walk up to 2 hour each way to school;
- Many have had nothing to eat and are unable to concentrate;
- Many live with an elderly grandmother and several siblings and cousins;
- Child-headed households are quickly on the rise;
- Many cannot pay school fees or purchase books and are forced to sit at home.



Motati Primary School



Sefapanong Primary's kitchen

- Concrete floors are crumbling, walls have cracked, foundations are weakening;



Paray Primary School

Challenges Facing Lesotho Schools

- Teachers have few resources to work with;
- Teachers board at the school during the week and must live in difficult housing conditions;
- School buildings are old and there is no money for maintenance or repair;



Katlehong Primary School

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Editor's Message

Welcome to issue #2. As you've seen, this issue focused on Ottawa-based twinning schools. I've enjoyed meeting the teachers, students, and parents, learning about their activities, and documenting the unique dynamics they work within.

Thank you to the Ottawa area contacts who gave of their time and for doing edits to my writing. Thank you Cindy May for writing your articles.

They say that "imitation is the greatest form of flattery". Consequently, I've put a fair amount of detail into each article so that you could imitate an idea that grabs your attention, now or in the future. Do you remember the old Cracker Jack commercial: "What did you learn at school today?" And the child says, "sharing!" This newsletter

is meant to share ideas, recognize all your efforts for your twinned schools, and to hopefully connect people (feel a part of a collective team).

So everyone can put a name to a face here I am doing what I love to do, musical theatre.



I work four days a week as a Learning Design Specialist at the Canada Revenue Agency, and on the fifth day volunteer and do things for my development and enjoyment. I volunteer at a local public school doing drama and

singing with the grade 1s, contribute to this newsletter, keep in touch with Lefu, a 13 year old boy I sponsor at the Bytown Orphanage, practice my hand-drumming, read, and get out skating/running on or along the canal.

Issue #3 to come in the future, will focus on all the other remaining twinning schools in Canada (I'll be emailing you!!!). It will also provide brief updates on the Ottawa schools' activities.

Enjoy the remainder of Winter and then celebrate Spring.

Cheers,

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