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## Mission Statement

The U.S. - Africa Children's Fellowship, Inc. is dedicated to expanding and enhancing the education of children. Through developing respectful and trusting relationships, and appreciation for one another's culture, the project will increase educational opportunities for all participating children, and their communities. And it is through mutual understanding and support the children of Africa and the United States will build bridges to the future.

Activities in support of this goal include:

- Study and research
- Letter and e-mail exchanges
- Sharing of photographic histories
- School supports
- Collection of educational materials for African schools
- Raise funds for support these activities.

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# U.S. - Africa Children's

VOLUME 1

ISSUE 1

## *A Look Back at an Amazing Year 2004-2005*

The U.S. - Africa Children's Fellowship had high hopes that with the help of friends, students and caring New Yorkers, we could build a working relationship with some of the people of Southern Africa. We never dreamed that by the end of our second year we would touch the lives of 18,000 children and transformed the educational outlook of 35 schools. This has been a truly incredible year and a small reminder that when good people work together they can accomplish great things.

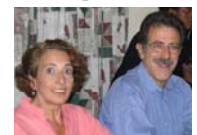
It would have been great to have you along to see two-dozen local school officials walk around a room filled with hundreds of boxes of school supplies in utter disbelief and just when they came to thank us for all we had brought, we turned with a smile and led them into a second room that had even more boxes. I wish you could have met the aunt who waited quietly for hours in the principal's office just to express gratitude for the first sneakers her nephew had ever received. And I wish you could see young children sitting under African trees with books on their laps and reading about things they never dreamed existed. What a wonderful thing we have done together.

This past year's drive involved 12 sister schools, four non-paired up schools, our food coop, friends and neighbors. Together we gathered over 800 boxes of school supplies. Included in the shipment were 20,000 textbooks, 10,000 children's books, school supplies (pens, pencils, paper, etc.), sports equipment, toiletries, toys, fencing and clothing. One school that received the materials had had no books, no pencils, no paper and no chalk.

USACF strives not only to help supply the materials needed in Africa, but to strengthen the bonds between Americans and Africans. This program is not about a rich country helping a poor country. It is about two proud people learning about each other and understanding their commonality and differences. To this end - students, teachers and principals will be exchanging letters four times a year. They will share their lives with pen pals. American students will learn a greater appreciation of what they have and discover that they have the capacity to change the lives of others. African students will discover the world that exists beyond its borders and will wake each day with a greater hope for their future.

Thank you!

Mark Grashow &  
Sheri Saltzberg



## ITEMS NEEDED BY ALL SCHOOL:

- **BOOKS** - children's books, young adult novels, classics, poetry, reference books, maps and any set of textbooks
- **SCHOOL SUPPLIES** - pens, pencils, erasers, writing pads, notebooks, paper, calculators, rulers, blackboards, chalk, etc.
- **ART SUPPLIES** - markers, crayons, construction paper, paint, paintbrushes, glue, glitter, scissors, stapler and staples, pen sharpener, etc.
- **SPORTS EQUIPMENT** - soccer balls, volleyballs and nets, basketballs and rims, cricket sets, tennis balls and rackets, ping-pong sets, sneakers, shorts, etc.
- **TOILETRIES** - soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, nail clippers, shampoo, sanitary supplies, plastic gloves, etc.
- **FIRST AID SUPPLIES** - disinfectants, skin creams, bandages, etc.
- **MISC.** - bicycles, garden tools, board games, radios, batteries, fencing, etc.

## Making a Difference

To give you an even stronger picture of the effects of the shipment and to further warm the cockles of your heart, below are excerpts of comments made by principals during a meeting in Bulawayo...

### Ms O Ndlovu, Head, Swazi Secondary School

"The number one thing I'd like to talk about is the sneakers. We gave them out to the children we thought needed them most, the ones who walked the longest distances with no shoes and could not afford them. Parents and grandparents have been coming to the school ever since to express their gratitude. One woman told a story of how the child who had received shoes had no parents. They had both passed away and the child had nothing.

Excitement around the sports equipment is also pretty high. I overheard one of the children saying "next year, I am going to play sport since there are uniforms for sport." You find that in most cases, students were not participating in sport because they had a limited number of clothes, which they could not also afford to use for sport. So the equipment and sports clothes we received made a huge difference as well, in addition to the books."

### Mr. Bhokokuhle Dube, Mangubeni School

"When we received the books, the first thing we did was to call together the parents and the community to come and see what had arrived. The community response was overwhelming. We sorted the books and have now started a library with novels. Morale amongst the teachers is really high. They have the books that they needed. For example, we received a shipment of Shakespeare books that are a compilation of Shakespeare and include all the books that we teach in school – the Merchant of Venice, Julius Caesar... many others. Now the students can actually read the books that the teacher is talking about."



### Mr. Phathisa Moyo, Head, Lukala Primary School

"Our library has always been under-resourced. We had shelves, but no books. Now we have put our books on the shelves. Now kids can borrow books for more than school day. Previously, they had to borrow a book at the beginning of the day and return it later that same day. We have also invited parents to use the library as their resource. They are very supportive of it."

### Ms. Vivian Phahlaphahla, Head, Fatima Primary

"We received pens, fencing, pencils – enough pencils for every child in the school. The first time that this has happened. The 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Grades got pens and rulers in addition to the pencils.

We have changed our library to a bigger room. What was once our staff room for the teachers to meet and relax is now the library because it is a much bigger room. The students can now walk in at their leisure and read books at their will.



... ORAP's best movers...

We also called together the parents and they were so excited. They asked if they could come and also read books, and of course we agreed. Fatima has electricity so we are even planning to begin night classes for the parents."

### Mr. Edward Phiri, Deputy Head, Swazi Primary School

"We had a very little library. It was always open to the community, but people would stop and just look at the shelves and remark "there are no books here!"

We called the parents to come and welcome the gifts that we had received. I have never seen the library this busy. There is a lot of excitement. Parents were overjoyed and, as others have said, they were in tears. They were so happy to receive them. We also got toys. At our school we have what we call Grade Zero, where we prepare kids for school.

Our enrollment in the Grade Zero class was really down, but now we have from 15 pupils to over 80 because of the toys!

But I must say, the vigor, which the kids have to read, is at an all time high. I am sure that we too and create a culture of reading in our school."

### Mr. Frank Mdlongwa, Head, Tame Primary School

"Our school is in a pretty bad state. The Grashows were shocked to see it. It is not a good sight at all. We have no desks or chairs. We also had no books at all. Not one, other than the teachers' books and guides. Teachers are now inspired to see books. They have the tools they need to educate. One of them even commented to me, "I thought that those people were joking two years ago, but look; they did come back as they said they would." People are very happy. It is now easier for us to ask about how the kids are doing because they have something to read. Before, the question didn't even make sense."

### Mrs. Chipunza, Head, Kanda Primary School

"A lot of students used to have to go home and get pencils because the teachers would not want them to come to class without stationary. Some had forgotten them at home. Some could not afford it. These children would cry at times because they knew they had no way out. They could not go home and ask their parents to buy the pencils. Some had no pencils. Some just knew that there was no way their parents could afford the pencils. So now, the teachers keep spare pencils in their classrooms so that they kids don't have to cry any more. They have pencils for those that do not have, or for those that forgot them."

### ORAP - Our Partner

Organization of Rural Associations for Progress is a 25 year old NGO dedicated to sustainable development and the eradication of poverty in the rural areas surrounding Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. A grassroots organization, their programs include: Food Security and Rural Livelihoods; Community Mobilization and Capacity building; Water Resources Development; Conservation and Management of the Environment; Micro Enterprise Development; Education and Training; and- Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management.

We are happy to be in a partnership, where we truly share the vision of a quality education for all children.



### Some Facts:

#### USACF/ORAP SUPPORTS:

- 5 Secondary Schools and
- 30 Primary Schools
- Consisting of approximately 18,000 students.
- Students range in age from 5 to 19 years.
- 20% of the students are orphans.
- Of those , approximately 5% live in child-headed households



## Our First Correspondence from the teachers of Zimbabwe...

"It is worth mentioning that the school as young as it is (established in 1994) is serving 402 families whose homes are scattered all over the place and stretch up to a radius of 20 km. What this effectively means is that +/- 150 students would be traveling a distance of 40km to and from school daily. This is no easy job. We have no dormitories. For the last 10 years the school has been managing what we call "bush boarding". Students stay at school illegally. They look after themselves and this alone exposes the girl child, in particular, to a lot of risks like pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and the like."



...Watching the boxes being unloaded...

"Swazi Primary was established in 1910. It has a big enrollment. We have 637 students, 342 boys and 295 girls. We enroll 6 year olds and the range goes up to 14 year olds. Our students are classified in three main categories - infants (232), lower junior (242) and upper junior (159). Amongst the students above we have orphans without both parents and these number 113, hence the pyramid shape as they go up the stream. Most of them drop out due to failure to pay school fees."

"Currently our school does not have any textbooks and sporting equipment to use during sports. We only have one textbook per teacher to us and none for the pupils. Also we have no textbooks at all for content subjects. Pupils write on the floor due to the lack of desks and chairs. Most pupils have problems of grasping concepts and reading, because of non availability of textbooks and reading materials."

"We also have a garden in which we grow vegetables and other crops. At the present moment there is nothing growing due to the lack of funds to buy seeds. At times we have a problem of stray animals getting into the school premises then into the garden because one fence is not all that durable. We also have a library at the school, but we have no books."

"We get our water from a borehole which is within the school grounds. We use Blair toilets, which are shared at a ratio of one toilet's squat hole to 25 pupils. Also there are only three (3) bed roomed and one (1) bed roomed house for our teachers. The houses are not electrified. The teachers use firewood for cooking and candles for lighting in their shared houses. Although we like reading, there is no proper library in the school. A few books are kept in the Head Mistress' office and we take turns borrowing them because they are not enough even for the upper grades to borrow on three different days."

## ...And from the students:

"I'm Siphathisi Marasha. I'm 16 years old. I live in a poor family and I'm an orphan and my relatives are not able to pay my fees. In other times, we end a week eating porridge. I wish to have a good friend like you. I live at Sinkugwe Village and it is far away from school. My hobbies are watching television. I like to eat rice with chicken. Distance from home to school may be it's about 20 km."

"My name is Patience Mayo. I am 14 years old, presently at Swazi High. I was born in 1990, November 16. I come from a small family of four and I am the third born, one boy and three girls. I live with my mother, my father is in South Africa. He is old so that he cannot be able to support us for a long time. I always spent a lot of my time doing household duties. I like reading novels, magazines and also listening to the radio. And I like playing netball."

"My name is Jeffrey. I am a boy. I am in grade 2 at Lukona Primary School. I like playing soccer after school. We are two in my family. I am the last born. I live with my mother's sister at school. I am an orphan. I did very well this year that I passed. I don't have a uniform or shoes. My school is not very big. It has 10 teachers and we are about 380. There are villages near my school. Some children walk between 5 and 8 km a day. I like school very much. Your friend, Jeffrey."



...everyone likes a story...



**Clockwise from the top left:** Kabwata's children; Mrs. Myanda, Sheri and the laundry; The Long Awaited Cargo; Thanks to ORAP staff, the container was emptied; sorting the boxes for each school; School Headmasters meeting for the first time; Mark shows ORAP Directors what USACF has brought; ORAP Education Program formally accepts the shipment; Our remarkable truck drivers; and a book in the hands of a child.

## A Brief History of the USACF

In September of 2003, we (Sheri Saltzberg and Mark Grashow) had an opportunity to visit a number of schools and orphanages in Southern Africa. There we met hundreds of children eager to learn and resolute in the belief that school held the key to their future. At every turn we found remarkable and committed teachers, eager to do anything and everything in their power to provide a more meaningful education to their students. Long meetings were held with principals, teachers, parents, and local leaders to provide a greater insight into the needs of local communities and schools. In all our discussions there was always a sense of inspiration, hope and vision for the future of the children of Southern Africa. Parents and educators stand ready to build their nation's future through their children. They will do it, one step and one brick at a time, but they will do it. But they cannot do it alone. They need our help

The obstacles are huge. We visited schools that had six pens for six hundred students and met children who slept on concrete floors when it was too late or too far to travel home. We found schools libraries with no books and children with HIV disease who received no medication. In one school, 700 students went with no breakfast or lunch every school day. In another, eight teachers shared a small outdoor toilet and cooked their meals under a dilapidated lean-to.



... Mark meeting with faculty ...

There were science labs with no chemicals or test tubes. We watched kids playing soccer after school using a paper ball wrapped in tape because the school did not possess a single piece of sports equipment. With each school and orphanage we visited, one thing became crystal clear. We could play a significant role in expanding and enhancing the learning environment. We came home with a new mission. The USACF, a non-for-profit organization, was founded.



... learning new skills...

Recognizing the needs of these schools and having the capacity to raise money and amass materials is only a beginning. What is crucial to the success of any such undertaking is having locally established trusted agencies organize and oversee this comprehensive effort. We have found such an organization in the Organization of Rural Associations for Progress, (ORAP). Founded in 1980 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe ORAP, is a grassroots organization dedicated to helping local residents and communities develop small businesses, viable agricultural and comprehensive educational systems. They stand ready to implement and facilitate all aspects of the program.

Working with ORAP, school leaders and elected officials, we formulated a plan to link dozens of schools in New York with their African counterparts. The partnerships will have three components:

1. The students of each school will share histories, personal as well as historical, through books, letters, photos and e-mails. Students will attempt to learn as much as possible about each other's culture and seek ways to link their worlds together.



... a class room in need of help...

2. Once a year a 40-foot container will be shipped to Durban, South Africa loaded with requested and donated materials. Shipments will include tens of thousands of books, science equipment, calculators, computers, art supplies, sports equipment, paper, pens, pencils, linens, towels, medical supplies, maps, sewing kits, seeds and tools. Meeting specific needs of individual schools is a priority. ORAP will truck the donated materials directly to the participating schools.
3. Funds will be raised to not only pay for the storage, shipment of goods and the purchase of specifically requested materials such as brick molds and sewing machines, but for school uniforms and individual scholarships. Funds would also be used to purchase locally printed books as well as other educational materials not available in the States.

We look forward to the day when all students will have at their disposal the books and materials they need for a quality education and when the children of our sister schools will be able to follow the educational path that their minds and hearts want to take them.

## Support Zambian Orphanage

The USACF also provides support to an orphanage in Lusaka Zambia. Started by Mrs. Angela Myanda, Kabwata is responsible for 60 children fostering in nearby villages and another 90 children on site a local compound. Last year the Quilters' Guild of Brooklyn collected and shipped cartons of sheets, towels, pediatric ointments, etc. During our recent visit to Kabwata, Mrs. Myanda said their current needs are for children's underwear and shoes, and sanitary supplies for the older girls. The request is so basic; USACF will work to collect these items.

We are already planning for the next delivery. As of this writing 26 schools have been paired up. We expect at least 32 by the end of the month. We have set aside November and the first two weeks of December as the next collection period. We hope to ship some time in February and meet the shipment in Bulawayo in March.

Since so many schools are now involved we think that it may be necessary to ship two containers.

**Each container costs \$10,000 to ship.**

We look forward to another incredible year, but we still need your help. You can help by supporting us financially or by donating needed supplies. (We are hoping to send over 300 bicycles in the next shipment.) This project changes lives and not by the hundreds, but by the thousands. Help us keep it alive.



### U.S. - Africa Children's Fellowship

The US Africa Children's Fellowship, Inc. is a non-profit organization, dedicated to expanding and enhancing education for children in the US and Africa.

We are primarily dependant on your kindness, generosity, vision and trust. All gifts are tax deductible as far as the law permits.

- \$ 25.00  Friend      \$ 100.00  Mentor      \$ 500.00  Head Master/Mistress - Principal  
 \$ 50.00  Supporter      \$ 250.00  Teacher      \$ 1,000.00  Ambassador

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Would you like to join our mailing list? (circle one)  
 YES NO

Would you like to remain anonymous? (circle one)  
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