



SUITCASES for AFRICA

News Letter

Spring/Summer 2012



The Beraldo Family Medical Clinic and Resource Center Opens in Emalindi.

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A Dedication...



The New Healthcare Center will serve 6,000 in this remote community.

The Albert and Emanuela Beraldo Family Medical Clinic and Resource Center

By Charlotte Marcella

I arrived in Kenya on January 5th ready and eager to begin work on the Emalindi Health Center. My plan was to stay for 6 months, get the clinic up and running and visit all other SFA projects.

It took one month to meet with various contractors and health officials before the actual work could begin. Several estimates were received for each aspect; plumbing, electrical work, masonry, carpentry and painting and I wanted to hire local workers for the job. Finally contracts were signed and the work began. David our SFA administrator and I purchased all of the materials ourselves in Kisumu, the closest city, and monitored the inventory daily. I was met with a number of surprises right from the get go, the most amazing one to me in my naivety, was that all workers expected to be fed twice daily while on site. This posed a number of problems. One was that it was not included in the budget, and secondly how was I going to feed 16 men daily for 2 months with a mud hut for a kitchen and no skills in making ugali?

The Beraldo family graciously agreed to cover the cost and Fr. Paul's cook said he would take care of the cooking. My job was to buy the food and to help with its preparation, although I didn't pass muster cooking over an open fire and my sukuma wiki was definitely wanting. I resigned myself to washing the vegetables and the dishes and carrying the meals back and forth to the worksite. Joseph volunteered to carry the 22 kgs. of ugali each lunchtime.

The workers, all local tradesmen and laborers, met each morning, shoeless and without tools. They dug soak pits, latrines, a placenta pit and a medical waste ash pit. They moved bricks with a wheel barrow to the site and carried 35 kg bags of cement on their backs from the storage unit. I became a welcome sight each morning when I brought tea and maize and beans and again at lunch with the sukuma wiki and ugali.

At first it was constant digging and although we could see their progress, it seemed like it would take forever to get the job done. Then, almost magically, the clinic took on a life of its own. The toilets and shower and sinks were installed. The electrical wiring was put in and it was time to head back to Kisumu to buy the medical equipment. The district medical officer visited regularly and explained what each room should be used for. We had a delivery room, a room for resting postpartum, a pharmacy and 2 consultation rooms.



The cement bench all around the veranda was perfect for waiting patients. We bought shrubs and flowers for around the door so that the clinic would look welcoming. A management committee was formed



comprised of youth, women and men from the community. Their job is to oversee the running of the clinic, its financial management to ensure sustainability and to develop policies to meet the needs of their community

Elizabeth, a local women, made 1,200 mandazi (similar to a donut and extremely yummy) and 30 crates of soda were delivered from Kisumu. We were going to have a big party to celebrate and nothing says party in Kenya louder than soda and mandazi. Invitations were printed and distributed, volunteers arrived to help with the cleaning and local schools and the church choir had agreed to provide entertainment. Tents were ordered and chairs delivered; we were ready to go.





Opening day Arrives!

Opening day dawned sunny and hot. Ten nurses volunteered to help out that day, a free consultation day with free vaccinations for the children. A young male nurse, Dominic, also trained in community development, was hired and he arrived dressed in a suit and tie, ready to greet his patients. So many people came, young mothers, old mamas and everyone in between so we had to bring in benches for extra seating.

It didn't take long before the singing and dancing started. Once all of the officials arrived speeches began; they are big on protocol and the speeches lasted 4 hours! Since I had been around every day with the workers I had a chance to hear their thoughts about the clinic. My speech, in faltering Swahili focused on dispelling some of the myths that I had heard, namely that the clinic was just for women, only available to one religion or one

tribe. I said "hapana", meaning no, many times, hoping to get the message across that the clinic was open to everyone. Then it was time for mandazi and soda and the nurses got to work. Visits to medical facilities are not free in Kenya, and since there was no charge on this day, you can only imagine how busy the clinic was.

The day ended with a tremendous storm, and yet people waited to see the nurses.

I went by several times before returning to Canada and each day people waited patiently on the benches, babies in arms and older folk with walking sticks. Dominic reassured mamas that although the injections would make their babies cry, it was necessary for their health. He had the mamas pray first and he brought them in together so they could support each other.

The clinic is the only one around for a 20 kilometer radius and transportation is sketchy at best. That's why Father Paul was nicknamed Father Ambulance as he used to be woken in the middle of the night to transport to the hospital with his car, the expectant mothers and others in need of medical attention. The area has 6,000 people and is one of the hardest hit by HIV/AIDS in Kenya. There are 2 primary schools, a secondary school and a hostel for homeless children all within walking distance. There is no doubt that the clinic will enhance the lives of those in the Emalindi community. I am so very grateful for having been part of this experience.

Thanks go to our generous donor, the Beraldo Family, help of SFA and the support of Father Paul and David. This clinic, once an empty building is now bustling with life and hope for those in this remote community called Emalindi.



Clinic Photos Tell The Story



Making furniture for the clinic.



The provincial nursing officer in the laboratory.



A mother and baby consult with a nurse.



An elderly man is attended to.



Jubilation as pupils welcome the new clinic.



Crowds enjoy the celebration.

Phylis Begins her Career as a Seamstress



Many of you have been following the story of young Phylis who was the first young woman sponsored by SFA to attend a tailoring program. As the oldest of eleven young orphans in her family, SFA realised developing a job skill would be necessary so that she would be able to support them all. The project has gone well with Phylis finishing her course in December 2011. We are pleased that Phylis now works making the school uniforms for our 30 sponsored school children in the community of Khayega. Working with an experienced local seamstress, she continues to be mentored and to gain experience with other sewing contracts as well. Life will be more secure in the future for Phylis, her baby daughter, "Blessed", and her many dependents.

These are your donations at work!

Thank you to the many supporters who made Blankets & Bed Mats. They will bring comfort.



Emalindi Orphan Hostel is home to 54 orphans with another 20 expected to arrive soon. Some sleep on broken beds many without mattresses and some without even that! They were so happy sewing together their own blankets and celebrating at a simple party with balloons and sweets. There is much more help needed here.

The Bed Mats are now in use at the Kakamega Women's Prison keeping their babies off the cold damp floor upon which they sleep.



A picture speaks a thousand words. Thank you to all who made these bed mats from milk bags. We are sure these mothers are comforted by your gift of caring and compassion.

Pennies from Heaven Campaign

Now that pennies are about to become extinct we invite you to liberate them from your old jars and tins so they can be put to one final good use.

Perhaps they will feed orphans, help to build a classroom or with what is most urgent!

Please consider donating your pennies to Suitcases for Africa! Let them go out in a blaze of Glory!
Thank You!

If you would like to help us roll them please contact us. Please email us at suitcasesforafrica@yahoo.ca to find the closest drop off point for them.

We thank **Soko** in Pte. Claire Village for being one convenient drop off location.



Thanks to you, SFA is Making a Difference:
One Child at a Time. One Community at a Time.



How Canadians are Helping in their Own Way

SFA would not be able to realise the wonderful projects taking place without the help of many Canadians who are finding ways to get involved. We thank them for sharing their ideas and their time and talents in many simple and creative ways. We are proud to introduce some of them to you today on the following pages. **THANK YOU!**

The Little Church with the Big Heart



St. George's Anglican Church, Ste. Anne de Bellevue

A wonderful partnership between this dynamic parish community and SFA has developed over the last six years due to their compassion and commitment. Our mission to care for orphans and vulnerable children in Kenya has been taken into their collective hearts and become their mission as well.

It is truly astounding how many lives they have helped to change for the better over these years. In 2012 they have raised funds through cupcake sales, donation card sales and the weekly "Book Nook" run by Eric Winn during the Ste. Anne's Winter Market which is held in their church hall every Saturday. Over this past Lenten Season they collected sheets for the Mukumu Hospital, the new Medical Clinic and an orphan hostel in Emalindi. They also raised funds to sponsor the shipment of five suitcases! The congregation is pictured above on a day they made a card of friendship signed by all to be delivered to their Kenyan friends. The following page highlights some of the wonderful work they are doing.....

St. George's Anglican Church in Action!



The Spring Cupcake Sale



Eric Winn and the Book Nook. Fr. Paul visited the book nook during his November visit.



Fr. Paul was surprised and very touched by their gift of a computer so he can now stay more easily connected to SFA without having to travel long distances to an Internet café.

St. Edmund School Comedy Night March 23rd. 2012

What a night!

It was Comedy Night at St. Edmund Elementary School in Beaconsfield in support of SUITCASES FOR AFRICA.

Everyone was in fine spirits as they gathered in the gymnasium that had been transformed thanks to the decorations created by Louise Cavaliere and the after school/daycare program. The elephant and zebra posters really set the African theme for the night.



Neil Janna was the host for the evening. Joey Elias was the headliner comedian along with Peter Radomski and Kevin Gasior. The whole team really outdid themselves and the only complaint that was heard during the night was - "my side is aching from laughing so much!!"

Comedy Night Continued.....

A huge and grateful thank you goes to Ms. Nathia Messina, the principal of St. Edmund School, and to the whole staff, all of whom could not have been more welcoming and helpful.

The cash bar was once again efficiently manned by Richard Buchanan & Paul Anderson - assisted by Stephanie Johns & Kirsten Rhodes. Great job all of you!

There are way too many other people to name who put in a tremendous effort to make this evening the success it was: the organizing committee; the set-up and clean-up crew; the decorators; the shoppers as well as everyone who donated prizes for the raffle table. This was truly a community event.

A special thank you goes to Kelly Fraser who had the vision to have the first comedy night 6 years ago and continues to be the driving force.



Over \$5,000 was raised this year for SUITCASES FOR AFRICA! With the effects of the drought still prevalent in Kenya the money will be put to good use.

Asante - Thank you to everyone who worked so hard for the orphans and vulnerable children in Kenya.

A Cow named Veronica



We would like to thank some very special "snowbirds" from Canada who used their time in sunny Florida this winter to start a special project.

The group from "Vero Beach" raised funds to purchase a cow for an SFA community in need.



They requested only that she be named **Veronica** after their winter community.

DONE!

Purchased at market in April, below, Veronica will now provide income for another group of 4 widows and their children. They are part of the self-help group Maisha Mapya. (which means New Life in Swahili)

Veronica is due to deliver a calf in October which doubles the value of this life changing gift.



Thank you all!

Community Service with a Smile



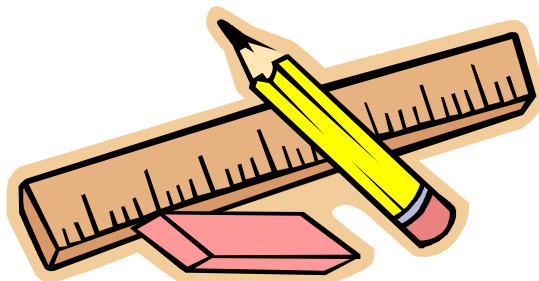
On a bright but cool Saturday morning in February Nicholas Farrow, as his community service commitment at his school, donated a few hours to help sort suitcases at our warehouse. Nicholas helped repack clothes, soccer uniforms, books, medical supplies & educational materials into suitcases. He then helped load the van for delivery of the suitcases to Wendy's house in preparation for final packing for the April trip to Kenya. Thank You Nicholas - you were a tireless worker.

Ile Perrot Playgroup Collects School Supplies



Many thanks go out to the young students of the Ile Perrot Playgroup and their teachers, Mary-Ann and Kim. The children and their families experienced the happiness that comes with sharing as they filled a suitcase full of school supplies and made friendship hands destined for children at St. Paul's Primary School in Emalindi.

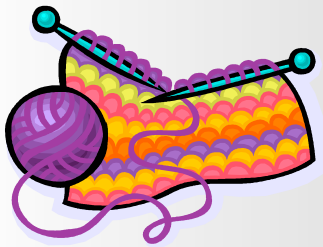
Thank you boys and girls!



Gifts from the Community

Wyman United Church, Hudson

We would like to thank the congregation of knitters at Wyman Church for the beautiful, colourful blanket squares they have worked on throughout the past winter. They have calculated they have now donated 995 squares this past year.



They are a gift of love and warmth.

Babar Books, Pte. Claire Village

Suitcases for Africa would like to thank Maya Munroe Byers and Babar Books in Pte. Claire Village. Their donation of so many beautiful new books are now the beginnings of a small library at St. Paul's Primary School in Emalindi. The books were prepared and reinforced by volunteers before being packed and taken to Kenya. They were joyfully received by the children.





The Bernadette Short School of Irish Dancing



We would like to thank The Irish Dance School for choosing Suitcases for Africa to be this year's recipient of their "Dance Off for Charity" held in February as part of the Valentine Day Competitions. Both Darlene and Wendy had the opportunity to attend the event and enjoyed it immensely. The children did a beautiful job dancing in each category and the Charity portion of the event raised \$1,360.00 for upcoming projects in 2012. Thank you boys and girls!



Children Helping Children



Annette Vezina and her class at Paroisse Ste. Anne de Bellevue chose to make "sharing" the theme of their Lenten Project this past Easter. The boys and girls did chores and assisted around their homes and community and also shared their allowances to raise funds for food. Thanks to them 2 children will be fed for 7 months! **Bravo!**

Here is their heartwarming letter.

"Dear Suitcases for Africa, The Ste. Anne de Bellevue catechism year three group is proud to present you with a cheque in the amount of \$70.00 for the Shamberere Feeding Program. We are happy knowing that even this small amount will make a lifesaving difference in the lives of a few children in Africa. We thank you for all the work you are doing in helping better the lives of so many children. Best wishes to your wonderful organisation!"

Nicolas & Sara Desaulniers, Zacharie Richard, Lydia Foti, Nikolas Myrand, Rawad Maasaad

Thank you to our Suitcase Sponsors



Many Thanks to **St. George's Anglican Church, Patricia Jackson and Lindsay Place High School** for sponsoring suitcases for the SFA team's working visit to Kenya in April. This time bed sheets were considered urgent for Mukumu Hospital, Emalindi Orphan Hostel and the new Beraldo Family Medical Clinic along with school supplies for St. Paul Primary School in Mwirembe, Emalindi. Thank you for helping them to get there.



An African Blessing

Walk tall, walk well, walk safe, walk free
And may harm never come to thee.

Walk wise, walk good, walk proud, walk true
And may sun always smile on you.

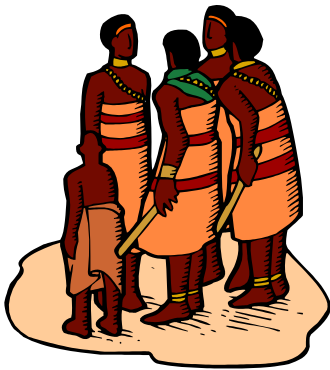
Walk prayer, walk hope, walk faith, walk light
And may peace always guide you right.

Walk joy, walk brave, walk love, walk strong,
And may life always give you song.



We would like to wish all our friends and supporters a restful safe summer. Thank you and best wishes from the whole Suitcases for Africa Team.

How You Can Help



- Join us in raising funds and awareness with your own ideas or events.
- Sponsor a project with your school, church, company, family, or friends.
- Make a donation to support our projects. A tax receipt will be issued for all donations of \$25.00 or more. www.suitcasesforafrica.com
- Contact us at suitcasesforafrica@yahoo.ca

We would like to dedicate this edition to the memory of Dorothy Ranger 1928-2012. Dorothy's heartfelt connection and support of SFA has helped change the lives of many children. Thank you Dorothy. You will always be an inspiration. May you Rest in Peace