



SUITCASES for AFRICA

News Letter

Winter/Spring 2024



A Joyful Return to Kenya Post Pandemic!

Table of Contents

Pages 2-5 Trip to Kenya 2024

Pages 6-9.... It Takes a Village

Page 10 Our Well Engineer, Stephen

Pages 11-12...Driving Adventures in Kenya

Page 13-14 ... In Memorium:

Florence Timms – Johnson

Pages 15-16 ... Distribution of Malaria Nets

Page 17-19 ... How Canadians are Helping

Page 20-22 ... Inspiring Visit to Kibera Slum

Page 23 Coming Event: Plant, Bake Sale & African Market

Page 24 On Making a Difference

Page 25-26 ... What's Coming Next & How You can Help



A Very Special Trip to Kenya in 2024

This year it was a very special trip to Kenya highlighting the strong connection between many Canadians and our partners in Kenya. Joshua was finally going to meet three separate communities upon which his fundraising efforts had a profound impact. Suitcases for Africa & Joshua's network of family, friends and well-wishers all joined forces to generate the crucial funds for three wells in rural Kenya.

The wells at **Kamachisu Dispensary, Chevoso Primary School & Indulusia School** are all still functioning and the communities thriving. Way to go Josh! Each facility welcomed us with open arms and made us "feel at home"



The SFA Kenyan team of Susan & Esther along with Canadian team members Wendy & Michele, joined by Joshua & Cori-Ann all celebrated together with the communities at each of the wells! Very special indeed.

Visiting the Communities in Kenya & the Three Funded Wells

Joshua & Cori-Ann Share their Experiences

Not only was this trip our first time to Kenya, it was our first time leaving North America. Other than a visit to Disney World, when he was 3, Joshua had never been on a plane. One might imagine the feelings this evoked. After 12 years of a long distance relationship, we were overwhelmed at the reality of visiting the community and meeting the people in Kakamega.

Finding words to describe the experience has not come easily, though we can say the experience has left us forever connected to the people of Kenya. After years of Wendy sharing stories, and photos, and even the odd telephone call with Susan, we felt pretty sure we knew what to expect. The reality of being there in person, however, was way more than we expected.

For starters, the climate and landscape were beautiful, and we even got a small taste of what it can be like during the heavy rainy season. We met people who shared stories of life in Kenya which gave us a glimpse of their day-to-day lives and struggles. Travelling from one place to another was thrilling. Whether the roadside hustles, the goats and cows grazing alongside the highway, the people going every which way on foot, tuk-tuks, piki-pikis, and bicycles, or simply the lush vegetation, there was always a feast for the eyes. Most significant was the volume of people and constant movement.



With time and reflection, we have determined the following to describe what we saw and felt:

Celebration - our presence drew more attention than was deserved, however, we shared in their joy of celebration and song.

Challenge - in spite of progress and success, we saw and heard about challenges, not the least of which are safe spaces for education, access to medical care, clean water, limited financial resources, and inequality.

Hope - together we hold hope and believe in better days.

Resourceful - we saw creativity and resourcefulness in how villages work to support and sustain each other.

Community - family, neighbour, friend... though disparities are significant, no one is isolated because community is everywhere.

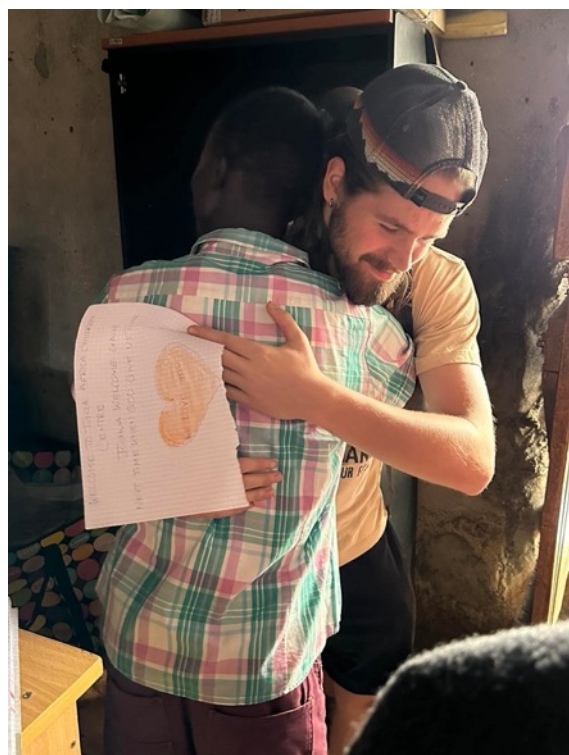
Future - we see a future of continued growth and evolution, education and youth empowerment.

Relationship - we were embraced as partners and friends, we were welcomed into homes and classrooms, and we formed relationships that endure distance and time.

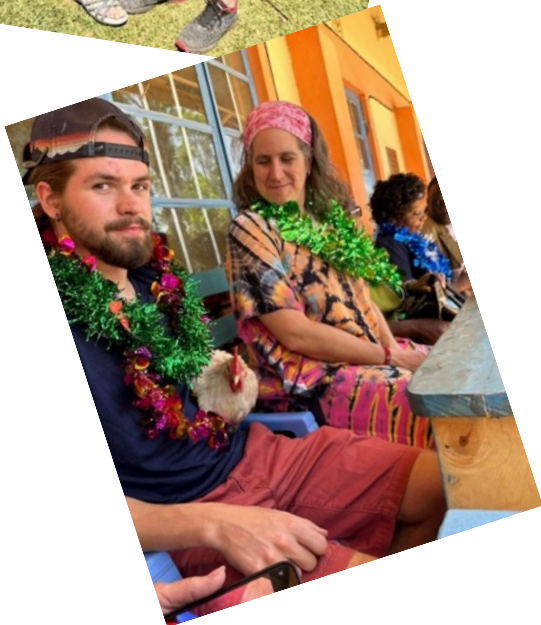
Finally, **"This is Kenya, feel at home"** - these words ring constantly as we return to our Canadian lives. Kenya and its people live in our hearts and prayers as we anticipate future visits. We look forward to learning more, sharing ideas and initiatives, and especially working together to encourage mutual growth and understanding.

As much as we felt "at home", here is a final quote from Joshua, "No matter the struggles we have in Canada, there is nowhere else I'd rather live"

--*"We need not think alike to love alike"* - Frances David



Some Favorite Photos of The Experience



It Takes a Village

The saying goes that it “Takes a Village to Raise a Child”. With regards to our Educational Sponsorship Program, it takes way more than that.

It begins with dedicated donors in Canada and the United States who have committed to funding the education of one or more students and honouring that commitment. It requires a commitment from the students to try to work hard to do their best – this on top of many household chores that require their attention! Our administrator Susan and her assistant Esther devote many hours to keep in touch with each & every student to determine their needs and/or worries.

We currently have fourteen students in university, college or technical schools this year. A few of these students are in their 3rd. or 4th. year of their programs.

We also have seven students completing secondary and waiting to hear what post-secondary program they will be pursuing in September.

There are thirteen students in high school who are working hard to complete their secondary level of education.

We could not be prouder of all of our students and appreciate how many of them come back every year to see us and to mentor the younger students!

Below are some of our students who have gone on for post-secondary education & been successful in their goals:

Wyckliff – Driving & now has employment

Franceene – Certificate in Plant Operation – wants to continue with further studies

Calistus – Certificate in Electrical Installation

Fred – Certificate in Mechanics & Driving

Vivian – Mechanics Certificate



Pictures of the Students Then & Now



Herbart

2012 & 2024

- graduated with a certificate in Electrical Installations and he is now self-employed. He is married & has an adorable little son.



Kingsley

2012 & 2024

currently enrolled in a certificate program for civil engineering and building construction.



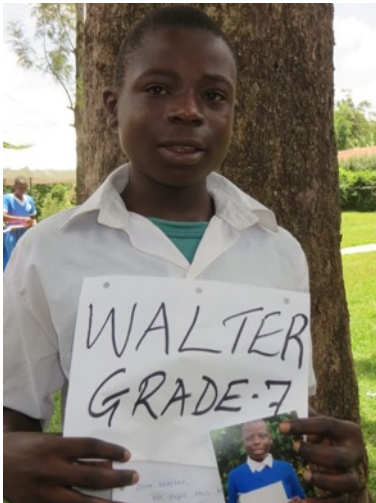
Henrietta-

2012 & 2024

graduated with a certificate in Catering & Hospitality and is now employed as a secretary in an electronics company



Humphrey – graduated in Mechanics/Driving & is now employed and has been mentoring other students



Walter –
2012 & 2024
Graduating this year from University as a teacher / library technician.



Dorine –
2013 & 2024
Graduated with a Diploma in Community Health & Psychological Counseling. She has been volunteering at an HIV testing centre.



Serving the students & their caregivers.

A Special Celebration Day with the Sponsored Students

Every year the children look forward to this visit and the celebration of all their efforts. They love to receive the letters from their sponsors and to write their own letters to send back to Canada. The children love singing, reciting poems or speaking prose or words of welcome which they do so well. We are always inspired by how talented they are in public speaking. A lunch is prepared and served to the children and their caregivers as part of this special day for everyone. We feel blessed to share it.



Writing letters to their sponsors.



Chevoso Students with their caregivers



Introducing Our Well Engineer...Mr. Steven Opunde of Samunei General Construction Company



During our March trip to Kenya we were very happy to see Steven Opunde (Samunei General Construction Company) who has been the engineer/contractor for most of our well projects – and is a very good friend to us all. Steven has recently suffered a number of serious health issues and we are thrilled that he is feeling much better and that he is prepared to spearhead our next well project.

Thank you Steven, for your expertise and efficiency during all these many years of working as a trusted friend, colleague & advisor!



Water is Life!
Thank you, Steven!

Our Excellent Adventure after Two Breakdowns in One Day! Thank goodness for our Drivers John & Wycliffe!



On May 19th, the day started out with a full itinerary of plans to visit two of the well sites that Joshua and SFA had jointly funded. As we were leaving the Indulusia Well someone mentioned that maybe Joshua would like to travel with Wycliffe on his motorcycle. What a question!! Wendy & Michele both agreed that they would be eager to do so if Josh didn't want to. Of course, Joshua jumped on the bike! Little did we know how our day was going to unfold! Not too far down the road our vehicle blew a tire. Our second flat tire in two days! John had to remove the wheel, load it in on the back of a pikipiki (motorcycle) and headed off to town. It was hot and dusty and it was clear that we were going to be by the side of the road for quite a while. Luckily Joshua & Wycliffe realized that we were no longer behind them.

When they returned and found us stranded it was suggested that perhaps pikipikis could be found to ferry us on to the next school visit. What fun – we had a blast and all of us got our time on a pikipiki!



Pikipiki rides it is then!



That was Fun!



In Memorium Florence Timms-Johnson

It is with heavy hearts that we say goodbye to Flo following her courageous battle with cancer. Flo was a good friend for way too many years to count..For many years Flo has been our “Knitter-in-Residence” making all the comfort dolls that we take to Kenya.

Flo loved to see the photos of the children as they received their fabulous gift from someone so far away! Lately Flo created many different knitting projects such as “Lamb Chops” hand puppets which were such a huge success at our fundraisers - much to Flo’s surprise.



*Thank you for all the joy
you gave to so many
children, many of whom
had never had their own toy
to cuddle before.*



Rest in Peace dear Friend



Malaria Nets in Memory of Ebi

Suitcases for Africa recently had the joy of distributing mosquito nets this spring in Kenya. Malaria kills millions world wide every year and disables many of those who survive. We lost our dear friend Dr. Ebi Kimanani-Johns to this terrible disease. Suitcases for Africa was born 18 years ago as a way to honour her memory and assist her

community back home in Kenya. Over the years thousands of nets have been distributed in the region and many deaths have been prevented.



This year 150 nets were purchased and delivered to the communities. We extend a debt of gratitude to our supporters and donors who contributed to our Gift Card Campaign for Malaria Prevention. This year 150 nets were purchased and delivered to our various project participants. The price of nets used to be 150 Kenyan Shillings each and now they are up to 650ksh per net! We think the benefits still out way the costs and we are thankful that we can supply so many children and caregivers with nets each year.

Community Net Distribution 2024



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, 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!



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



Many thanks to the children in the level 5 Faith First Program at **Corpus Christi Parish** for reaching out to show love and support to the children in our SFA Educational Support Program. The heartfelt messages and banner were presented to the Kenyan students during a day of celebration of their achievements with our visiting team in April.



Reading out the messages of support for the sponsored children at the celebration day

AN ENORMOUS THANK YOU TO THE OUTREACH COMMITTEE OF SUMMERLEA UNITED CHURCH

for designating SUITCASES FOR AFRICA's Water Projects – Joshua's Wells – as the recipient of the proceeds from their recent Jigsaw Puzzle Sale! Over \$1,300 will be going a long way to funding a new well in a very deserving community.



“The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others”. *Mahatma Ghandi*

An Inspiring Visit to Kibera Slum in Nairobi

While in Kibera in 2020 Michele & Wendy spent some time in Kibera, which is the largest slum in Africa and one of the biggest in the world. It is estimated that there are 1.5 -2 million people living in approximately 2.65 square kilometers.

We all returned to Kibera again this year with our friend and guide **Moses** – the “unofficial mayor” of Kibera. We are most grateful to Moses for introducing us to a wonderful new education facility deep in the heart of Kibera. The facility is called **“TUNZA AFRICAN CHILDREN CENTRE AND SCHOOLS”**

We were immediately impressed by the students and the staff. The school has 150 students and a team of dedicated teachers. Hopefully in the not -too -distant future there will be something SFA can do that will provide some meaningful assistance. Some of the rational for assisting in this area – in their own words - are:

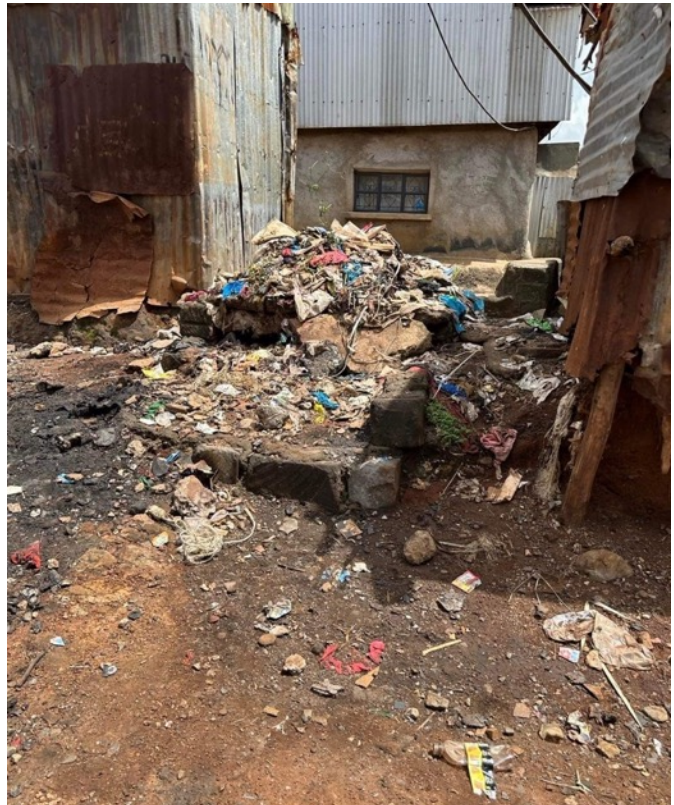


“Residents live with low incomes and the constant threat of eviction. Residents must buy water at high prices from vendors. 140 tons of refuse are generated every day but there is no council collection. Where toilets are available, they may be shared by as many as 100 people. An average of 4 to 6 people stays in a room of 3 to 6 metres. Most of the area is inaccessible to vehicles”.

“There are increasing incidences of diseases such as malaria, the human immunodeficiency virus and the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV & AIDS), malnutrition and other threats to health, such as substance abuse and psychotropic substance addiction, smoking and alcoholism”.

“Across the country 10% of the population controls 42% of its wealth and 50-58% of people live on less than \$1 per day. Kibera is characterized by the working poor who suffer greatly from underemployment!”

H O P E



To be continued...



Suitcases for Africa Coming Event...don't Miss It!



**Come out and join us for
our Annual Outdoor Plant Sale!**

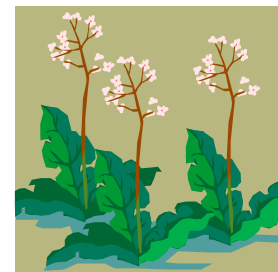
**There will also be a
Bake Table & African Market**

Asking all our gardening friends to donate any of their own surplus plants to help raise funds for our projects.
Baking talents also appreciated!

You will find us at our usual spot:

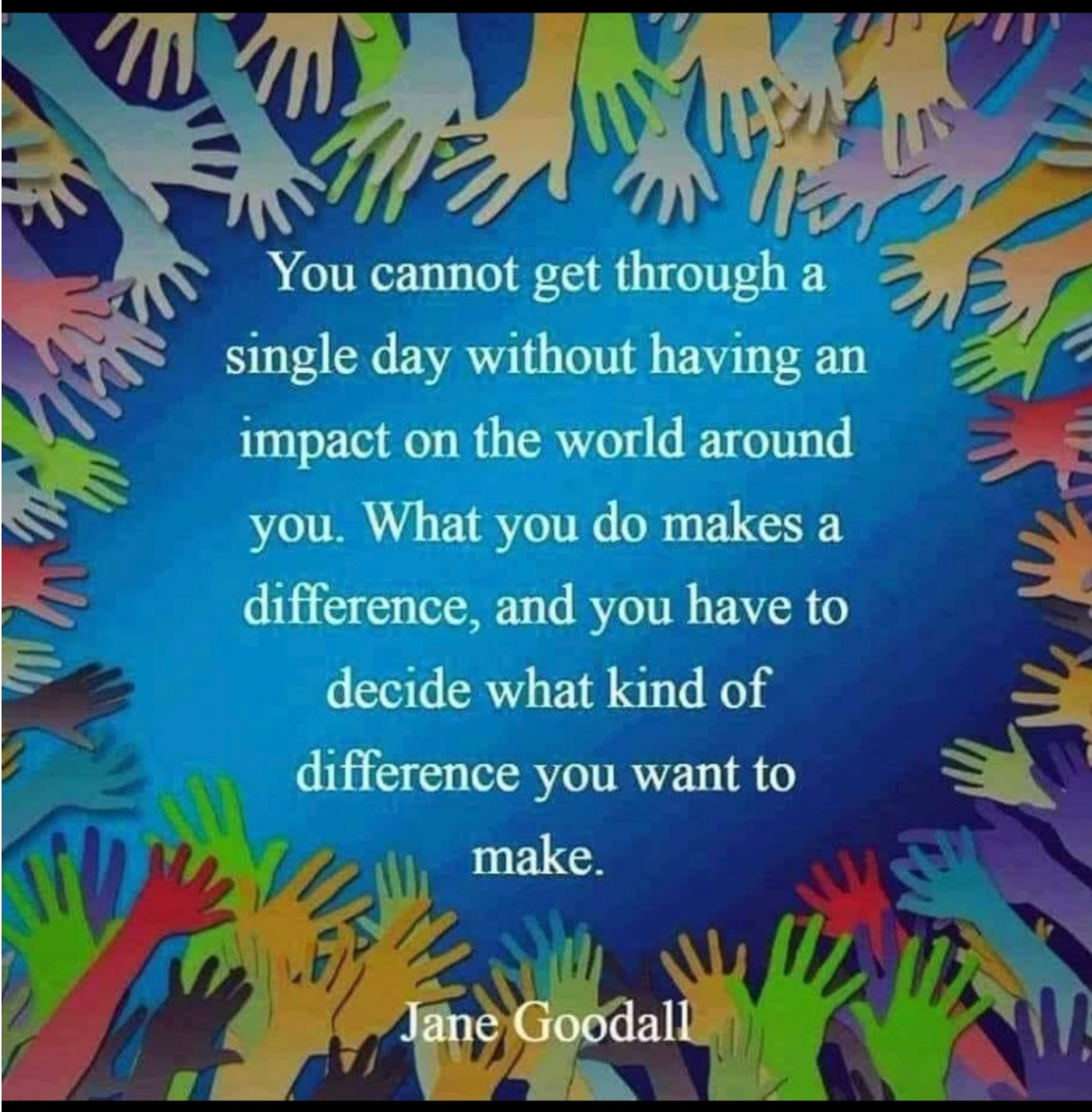
May 18th 9:00-12:00

61 Beaconsfield Court,
Beaconsfield, H9W 5G5



For information or to donate baking or plants please call:
Wendy 514 992-5500 or Darlene 514 436-6610





You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.

Jane Goodall

To learn more about the work of Suitcases for Africa...

Please visit suitcasesforafrica.com to read past newsletters, annual reports, view videos, photos and & learn how it all began.....

Stay tuned for what is coming next.....



How You Can Help



Follow us on Facebook for the latest news and photos.

“Like us” to spread the word on social media.

Thank you!

- 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.
- View our website for more information. www.suitcasesforafrica.com
- Contact us at info@suitcasesforafrica.com