

CLASS Act

SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Fall 2016 – In this issue:

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Spotlight on School Fundraisers

- ▶ The Red Shoelace Campaign was started by schools, including Citadel High School and Tantallon Elementary School in Nova Scotia a number of years ago and has caught on across the country. **Ecole Qayqayt Elementary** in New Westminster, B.C. launched a Red Shoelace Campaign this past school year, to raise money and awareness for the SLF's Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. They sold the shoelaces and then, in a creative twist, they repurposed the shoelaces into art to raise further funds: more than \$1,000!
- ▶ The Westlane Cares AIDS Walk is an annual walk spearheaded by **Westlane Secondary School** in Niagara Falls, Ontario. This is the 13th year that Westlane has sponsored the walk, which also involves the feeder schools in their community. This year they raised over \$750.00.

Take Action!

- ▶ **Mark World AIDS Day on Dec. 1st.** Organize an event, fundraiser or join grandmothers groups in a flash mob to mark World AIDS Day.
- ▶ Raise funds for an opportunity to walk the Fashion runway at the **Dare to Wear Love** Gala. Ask us about how to get involved.
- ▶ **Organize a School Fundraiser.** There are lots of ways to raise funds. Favourite and effective fundraisers include talent shows, bake sales and walks.

Contact us for more ideas or support and let us know what you have planned.

Contact:
communtiy@stephenlewisfoundation.org

Education and Training for the Future

ADAPTED FROM THE SLF 2015 YEAR IN REVIEW



There are roughly 14 million children orphaned by AIDS in Africa, up to 60% of whom are being cared for by their grandmothers. Many of our partners focus on supporting children affected by AIDS.

Their efforts are making education possible for many thousands of children who had to leave school, or never even had a chance to start, because of the impact that AIDS had on their families. They provide children with the extra support they need to stay in school; help with the cost of school fees, uniforms and books; set up kids clubs and youth groups; build libraries; and work with schools to design special programmes on HIV prevention and positive living.

Modest interventions such as paying school fees, and buying books and uniforms – are opening up new worlds of possibility for children. Ongoing mentorship support from community-based organizations is also helping them to succeed. They are attending classes regularly, they are learning, and they are advancing to complete primary school, get vocational training, enter apprenticeships, and graduate from high school. A growing

number can continue on to university, but every one of these children is gaining essential knowledge and skills that will benefit them for the rest of their lives.

At the same time, significant barriers still exist especially for girls who face sexual, social, economic and cultural pressures and violence. Unprotected sex not only brings the danger of HIV infection; it can also lead to unplanned pregnancies and an early end to education. SLF partners are trying to find more effective ways to respond to adolescents' vulnerability and exposure to risky behaviour.

Community-based organizations work holistically. In addition to helping children access education, they run soup kitchens and after school programmes; give young people the chance to be children again by expressing their feeling through art, music and sports; and make sure children and youth stay on antiretroviral treatment.

In this newsletter, we want to highlight the creative and exciting ways in which community-based organizations support young people affected by the global AIDS epidemic.

SLF Partners in Action

ADAPTED FROM THE SLF 2015 YEAR IN REVIEW



The Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA) runs a Girls Empowerment Program in schools. The clubs help young girls understand gender-based violence, stand up for their rights, build their confidence and develop leadership capacities.

Healing emotional wounds

MusicWorks in South Africa runs weekly music therapy sessions for children who have been referred to them by health clinic staff, teachers, nurses and parents. In their "Music for Life" programme, the music therapists continually see how the spirits of traumatized children and young people begin to heal by learning and mastering musical skills, and by making music with one another. Children take part in the programme in safe and structured spaces where people listen to them, respect their feelings and help them build their internal resources and self-esteem.

"One of our groups brought nine to ten year old children together for music therapy due to loss and grief. As a part of the songwriting process the children had a chance to write a verse about themselves. Some chose to write about their favorite colours, food, and activities. One girl, Vera, who lost her mother a few days before her fifth birthday, acknowledged the passing of her mom and how she came to realize she is not alone, but cared for. She wrote about how tired she is of people still thinking she is sad and how she is okay! She spoke of the support structures around her and her relationships with her father and brother. This was an opportunity for Vera to be witnessed as a strong and resourceful person: someone who*

overcame tragedy and moved past sadness and loss. Vera's process is an example of how music has the power to heal, to encourage, to strengthen, and to empower."

*Name has been changed to protect the child's identity.

Classroom Resources

- ▶ Check out the SLF YouTube channel [youtube.com/user/stephenlewisfdtn](https://www.youtube.com/user/stephenlewisfdtn) for video resources to use in classrooms.
- ▶ The African Grandmothers Tribunal film is now available online. Grandmothers talk about their struggles and successes in the midst of the AIDS epidemic – witnessed by a thousand cheering people at the Chan centre in Vancouver. Watch it at: africangrandmothertribunal.org
- ▶ Looking for a speaker? Across the country, members of the Grandmothers Campaign are available to speak to classes and assemblies. Contact us to get connected!

Giving Children Access to Education

Mavambo Trust was started in 2001 to address the critical needs of children orphaned by AIDS in the densely populated urban townships surrounding Harare, Zimbabwe. Mavambo's Learning Centre offers an accelerated educational programme with a learning-by-doing methodology for children between the ages of 8-12 in order to enable them to transition to mainstream education.

Mavambo came to realize early on, through its consultation with communities, that children were facing a complex web of challenges, and that stand alone educational support wouldn't suffice. So they put in place more holistic services including protection from violence and abuse, adequate nutrition, healthcare and support for staying on antiretroviral treatment, psychosocial support, and after-school tutoring.

Mavambo has become an oasis for hope for orphaned children, especially for those living in the most marginalized communities. Joining Mavambo Learning Centre means they have the support they need to grow. They have the pride of a school uniform, notebooks and pencils, good teachers and tutors, and one healthy meal a day. The students are excelling, outperforming their peers in mainstream schools, and continuing to rank at the top of their classes in the years after they leave the programme.

The real achievement has to be measured in people's lives, in the sense of self-esteem and belonging children have gained, in the acquisition of birth certificates and national identity for children and their caregivers, and in the dedication of their graduates, many of whom return to work with Mavambo as volunteers and mentors for their younger peers.

For more information about our partners and our work or fundraising ideas, contact us:

community@stephenlewisfoundation.org

or visit: www.stephenlewisfoundation.org