



Newsletter No 8

June'08

Hello Everyone

This latest trip to Kwazulu was a very different one for me as for the first time I took someone else with me. Gwen Cass accompanied me, it was her first trip to S Africa and we were both very excited at doing the trip together. Gwen is a dear friend of mine and having Gwen with me enhanced the trip enormously. Now I have someone who has actually experienced what I talk and write about, has met the amazing African people and the children we sponsor and has had an experience she will never forget. On the right is a photo of Gwen and myself with some of the children.



One Life has now been a registered charity for four years. We have over 200 children in school in S Africa due to educational sponsorship by people the U.K. The charity seems quite stable and its own small way is becoming known. When I arrived back from S. Africa at the end of April I found an email from Debbie Bliss of Walthamstow a knitwear designer with her own brand of wool who had been following One Life's progress through the local Guardian newspaper. She is now a supporter of the charity and in the three weeks since I have been back in UK has raised £480 through the sale of her wools and is also in the process of sponsoring one of our children and getting other people interested.

A short while ago I received a phone call from Penny Rolfe of St Anne's Church, Higham's Park to tell me that she will be holding a fund raising event on July 19th in aid of One Life and the church of St Anne's. A South African woman who manages a pub in Basildon has raised approx £700 for One Life which I should receive shortly so in this way I feel we really are an established charity now and I am grateful for all the support received. Since the onset we have sent out to S Africa £63,363.94p a substantial amount.



Just prior to my trip to Africa Rowe Sports of New Road Chingford donated eight complete football strips for the children at the Thandukuphila Centre and twenty pairs of football socks, what excitement these goods caused (see photo).



Larry of Bond's Puppets Covent Garden donated beautiful animal hand puppets for two of our crèches in S Africa (see photo). From the photo you can see how happy the children were.

Gwen and I were able to visit the school where two of our orphans attend who are sponsored by Chase Lane Primary School and Larkswood Infant/Primary School. This was a very enjoyable and worthwhile trip. We were welcomed with great warmth by both the class teachers and the headmaster and we spent quite a long time at the school with both the children and the teachers, (see photo)

We had brought with us from both schools here in Chingford pictures and letters from the children for the children in Africa also letters to the class teachers from the teachers over here and photos of the schools and of some of the children and a copy of the curriculum which the African headmaster found very interesting and showed an interest in implementing part of it into his own school curriculum. In return we bought back letters and drawings and photos and wonderful short video clips of the children in the classes in S Africa.



Both the teachers in Africa and the teachers at the two schools here feel it is very worthwhile to foster relationships between the schools and to raise awareness in our young people to the different lifestyles and educational opportunities that other children experience.

I bought back with me many photos of our trip to Africa which will appear on the website shortly and I also bought back photos and background information of more children in need of educational sponsoring so if you know of anyone who is interested in helping one of our children please do contact me (see contact details) at bottom of last page).

MONEY DONATED AND RAISED FROM FUNDRAISING EVENTS BETWEEN FEBRUARY'08 AND MAY'08

£1586 was raised on February 2nd from a Ploughman's Supper/Charity Auction held by Penny and David Rolfe and friends in St Anne's Parish Church hall.

£50 was donated on March 6th by a small local guides unit.

£700 approx was donated in March by various people in the U.K. for the support of the orphans we were to visit in Africa in April. This money was used for clothing, bedding, electricity, food, mattresses etc.

£518 was donated in May by Thames Wharf Charity.

£480 was also raised in May by Debbie Bliss of Walthamstow for the sale of her own brand of designer wools etc.

My grateful thanks to everyone for their support.

FUTURE FUNDRAISING EVENTS

July 19th – Summer supper/refreshments and entertainment by Cantando a very fine singing group. This is to be held in St Anne's Parish church hall on July 19th and is being organised by Penny and David Rolfe.

In autumn, date and venue still to be arranged, we will hold our annual sponsored walk.

If you wish to attend the summer supper on July 19th or are interested in joining us for the sponsored walk please contact me (contact details at the end).

AFRICA NEWS

My trip to Africa with my friend Gwen was once again wonderful and very worthwhile. It was slightly different this time as Gwen and I were able to take three days for ourselves and go to the coast (Durban) shortly after we arrived in S Africa. This settled us in Africa, relaxed and prepared us for our time to be spent with the two projects One Life supports that is the Thandukuphila Centre, Nseleni and Hope Project who take food to nine outdoor feeding centres in the rural area of Ndabayakhe. We were also offered and accepted a trip to a game reserve and were also invited to spend an afternoon at the house of the editor of the Zululand Observer newspaper the second largest newspaper in Kwazulu. She has just moved to a wonderful house on stilts in a game reserve and the animals roam around underneath and can be seen and enjoyed from the wooden veranda surrounding the house. So our work in Africa was interspersed with enjoyable breaks which I feel we both needed and benefited from.

Shortly after we arrived in Africa we went with Hope project to visit Gogo the 104 year old blind African lady (see photo) who One Life supports with money for food or whatever the family needs. She was in good health apart from a little backache from sleeping only on a blanket on the shack floor. She was so happy and excited to know we were there and we took her a wind up radio needing no batteries or electricity. She was very happy.



The following week she was to celebrate her 105th birthday so we took two big cakes, sweets for the grandchildren and the thickest mattress we could buy as a birthday gift. Bella from the Zululand Newspaper came with us and Gwen and I appeared in that newspaper the following week. Gogo enjoyed a wonderful birthday and hastened to remind everyone not to eat all her birthday cakes as she wanted plenty for herself. She had her daughter make and presented to me two beautiful Zulu mats.

On our second Sunday in Africa we were taken by Hope Project to Manzini to visit Tulani the seven year old little disabled boy with cerebral palsy who we managed to borrow a wheelchair for last year. He is now in a special boarding school where he is receiving an education and has physiotherapy for his legs and arm and he is now walking a few steps unaided and is so happy to be doing so. He has also just started to speak which his mother is delighted about. One



Life was able to pay for his stay at the school until the end of the year as his mum could only manage to pay for two months for him and was worried about his future. Whilst in Africa his mother who looks after many children with the help of Hope Project had some of the girls in her care sing and dance for Gwen and I (see photo on previous page) and they presented us each with a beaded bracelet and a beaded black bag.



Our next visit was to the Thandukuphila Centre, Nseleni, Nancy and her daughter Khanya. Nancy has been very ill and was on the slow road to recovery but still in great pain and having difficulty walking. From there with Khanya we visited some of the children, sponsored by people in the U.K, to the places where they live. Gwen and I were shocked at the lack of basic



facilities and the small depressing leaking shacks. With donated monies and other charity money we were able to relieve some of the suffering by supplying gas and a means of cooking and extra blankets to one little family and by purchasing blankets and mattresses and inserting electricity and therefore being able to purchase an iron, a two ring cooker and an electric kettle for another family. For another we supplied money for electricity to be set up and for others blankets, food etc.

Everywhere we went we helped when we could but it was and always is impossible to meet all needs and the reality of that was difficult for us both. We took money with us from some of the sponsors in U.K. with which to purchase footballs if they were sponsoring boys or back bags and toiletries for the girls and some sponsors actually gave us gifts to take with us on the flight for the children. It really was an exciting time for these children as basics are a luxury so receiving a letter or a gift was amazing for them.

For some grandmothers who lived not too far away from a town we gave money so they were able to buy what they needed and we brought over from England with us crayons, books, rag dolls, cars etc which we donated to Tulani's mother, as she is trying to run an outdoor crèche for the local children affected by the AIDS virus. We were also able to assist some people by giving money to help with bus fares to clinics and hospitals and we brought many bags of apple, crisps, biscuits and sweets to give out to children wherever we went. Many Africans I recognised and knew from previous visits so there was excitement on each side when we saw each other again. It really was a humbling experience for Gwen and I to be greeted so warmly and to be invited so happily into the African's homes, no matter how poor.



One family I wanted to visit who I mentioned in last April's newsletter was the family living down a dirt track far away from anyone else. Their surroundings are beautiful but that does not help with the dire poverty they live with. There is a mother, father and eight remaining children, their



eldest daughter died a few months ago. The children were in desperate need of adequate clothing and were dirty through lack of water and quite small for their age through shortage of food. There was though no doubt as to the love of the parents for these children. Their broken down shack of last year had partially blown down and was now used for cooking and the mother slept with the eight children

in one bed and the father in another in a small wooden room he had built for himself. With funding we were able to buy warm tracksuits for each of the children, and jumpers for the parents. We bought the older children back packs and toiletries for everyone and footballs for the boys and books and stickers, felt tips and pens for the older children and rattles and crayons and books for the little ones. The clothes were slightly big but we know they will sleep in them at night as well as using them during the day and would be very cosy and warm as there is no such thing as nightwear for families like this. Our interpreter told us that the mother had thanked God that this year her children would not be so cold.



Gwen and I, with Hope Project delivered food to the squatter's camps where people live in shacks that are unbelievably dilapidated and it was hard to believe that human beings inhabited such places (see photo). We were very pleased to hear and also see for ourselves that the



government are now building groups of one or two roomed small brick houses for these families without electricity but with an accessible water tap on land in the middle of the houses for all to share.

Unfortunately, one day, as we were travelling by car I got stung by a bee which was incredibly painful and because I had nothing to alleviate the pain I sucked my finger and after hearing how toxic some bee stings are in Africa I can understand why I became ill. I even collapsed in the street a couple of days later. This was worrying for Gwen and I and very unfortunate as we had much to do with the projects and I was unable to carry on. Khanya, Nancy's daughter did much of the photography for me and gave out most of the footballs and gifts from the sponsors which was very helpful and necessary but meant that I missed seeing many of the children sponsored for myself and missed out on their joy and excitement at receiving the gifts although their pleasure is apparent from some of the photos Khanya took (see photo)



Gwen and I stayed where I always stay with Sister Emmanuel and the three other Dominican sisters in Empangeni; Gwen was made very welcome and quickly became a part of the life there fitting in as if staying with Dominican nuns was something she regularly did. I knew the nuns would miss her when we left she brought such love and life to everyone there. Whilst we were there Sister Emmanuel celebrated her 84th birthday so we took her and the other sisters and some of Sister Emmanuel's friends for a meal at a game park. It was a beautiful place to visit and very tropical and the food was wonderful but the weather let us down so we were unable to travel in the game park to see the animals. It even hail stoned whilst we were trying to get home.



Our satellite feeding centre is now well established and we visited there one afternoon in time to see the school children arrive for their meal which the centre provides each day before and after school (see photo). What we need now is a large combi or people carrier minus the seats, to give more floor space, so our children who have to walk miles to get food and to



get to school can be picked up and taken safely there. Many of our children are HIV Positive and some not very well at all and do need a lift and also the rape of young people in these areas is very high so a combi is needed to ensure the safety of the children on their way too and from school. One of the little girls we visited in school, Qiniso Msweli age 8, sponsored by Chase Lane School here in Chingford, went missing for three days when she was five years old, she was found wandering and taken to a police station where it was discovered she had been held for three days and been raped. How a child ever recovers from such an assault I will never know. Physically she may heal but emotionally the scars will always be there at the back of her mind.

I have no plans to return to South Africa next year but I am intending to bring Nancy's daughter Khanya over here for a two to three week visit if Nancy is well by then and can spare Khanya who is invaluable to her mum and family and to myself here at One Life. I have constant contact now with Nancy and Khanya through the computer email system set up by One Life just prior to our trip to Africa this year. This makes all the difference to the charity as Khanya can send me information I need, receipts, take photos etc and give me peace of mind.

It is always good to be home but I miss Africa, it's people and the children and all the wonderful friends I have made there over the years I have been visiting. It is shocking to experience the realities of life for many of the children and their carers and it did and still does affect me when I think of how it is. It stops me complaining if it rains when I want the sun to shine, if I am a little cold or slightly hungry and impatient to eat, or if I think I have not got enough clothes (I have a wardrobe full). I know the trips inspire me to carry on with this charity work; they give me a reason for waking up in the morning and put more meaning into my life. If I give and you all join me in the giving I receive back so much more and I feel privileged to be able to do the work I do.

Please do continue to help me by continuing to sponsor the children for their educational needs or in any way you can. It means so much to the children to know that someone 6000 miles away really cares about them. Most have lost both parents; just a few have parents, most of who are terminally ill. Some of the children gave me letters to bring back for their sponsors each telling their own story and some stating how having someone care makes them feel human again or as if they now have another parent and all are motivated to do well in school and try and change their own lives.

Together we can help these children do that and we are helping them and I thank you all on behalf of the children for your loving support. Some sadly will not survive into adulthood due to the AIDS Virus and related illnesses. The antiretroviral drugs are helping many of our children but some are not well enough to receive it and for them there is little hope but we can help to make their remaining time more comfortable by keeping them warm and dry very importantly feeling loved.

I hope that this summer is a sunny, happy and healthy one for you all.

With All Best Wishes

Elena

Elena Utton, 43, Alpha Road, Chingford, London E4 6TD

Phone 020 8926 2431

elena@oneline-online.org.uk

www.oneline-online.org.uk