



# GIRLS ON THE MOVE

## ATSIKANA PA ULEENDO

# News

Fall 2007

[www.MalawiGirlsOnTheMove.com](http://www.MalawiGirlsOnTheMove.com)

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## School on the move!

by Christie Johnson

Our thanks goes out to the many people, families, Rotary Clubs, and schools who have donated money towards the construction of our first three buildings

at Atsikana Pa Uleendo (Girls On The Move) Secondary School. This dream is actually taking shape. I can not tell you how moving it was to stand with Memory and Henry at the center of the APU school site and look out over the land that is now swarming with excitement and activity as the



Women building the foundation on the first girls hostel



days' construction. Each day transport trucks carrying

sand, gravel and bags of cement are emptied into piles and construction workers go to work preparing the foundations and building the walls higher. The progress is slow but steady and it is clear that with the energy and determination that Memory and Henry and their team of

board members are focusing on this project, this school will indeed open its doors to 80 bright and eager young girls in just over 3 months time!



Recently fired brick, drying out in the sun on APU grounds

school takes shape, literally out of the soil that it is standing on. Every night another 1000 bricks are fired and piled into rows ready for the next



First classroom block sponsored by the Haywood family.

## Next Steps in Malawi



### Selecting our first 80 girls!

Right now  
Memory and  
Monica (APU  
Board Member)  
are heading out

to the villages to meet with the chiefs and village headmen to increase the awareness about the opening of APU Secondary School. They are speaking to standard 8 students in primary schools to explain the nature of APU, their selection / application process and to describe the kind of students that they are looking for. The selection process will begin in late October. Memory hopes to be able to send photos and write-ups of our first 80 APU scholars by early December.

The selection process will consist of an interview, an examination, an essay and a meeting with the teachers and parents of each prospective student. Memory will be looking for girls that would not have the means to go to secondary school on their own. A combination of financial need and academic potential will form the basis of the selection criteria. In addition, Memory will be looking for the personal qualities of determination, inner strength, commitment to education and leadership.

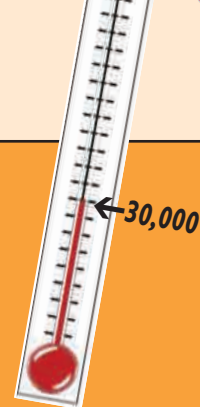


Storage Shed - our first completed building!

### Let's give these girls a chance to enroll in school.

At this point we have 27 full scholarships (4 years) and we are actively looking for more sponsors to cover the tuition of the remaining 53 girls that will start school in January, 2008. If you know of any families, individuals, businesses or clubs that might be interested in becoming a sponsor, please share our contact information with them or send their contact information our way. There are 53 young girls in Malawi hoping beyond hope that they will have the chance to attend APU in January.

80,000



### We need your

# HELP!!

**Your Educational  
Sponsorship can change  
these girl's life forever  
for only \$ 85.00 per month,  
\$1000 per year  
or \$4000 for all 4 years  
of Secondary Education**

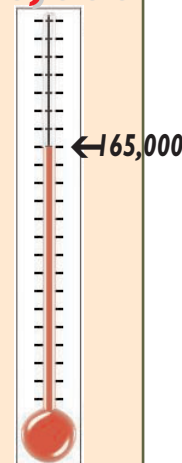


Your yearly scholarship of \$1000 will pay for one girl's room, board, tuition, textbook fees, school uniform, and examination fees. Of this scholarship, approximately 1/3 will be put into future construction projects so that the school will be able to grow with each intake of new students. Your scholarship will not only cover the cost of educating your sponsored girl but it will pave the way for more girls to follow in her footsteps.

### Completion of essential construction.

By the time the school opens in January, we will have a storage shed, a classroom block containing three classrooms, a girls hostel, and a staff house completely ready to go. Depending on the funds we are able to bring in before January, we hope to have running water (using a pump and a water tower), electricity, and a kitchen/cafeteria all constructed within the first few months of operation. "We are still very much in need of donations towards these construction projects. The Oak Bay Rotary Club is currently working on financing the water project through a Rotary International Matching Grant. So, with a little luck our girls will have running water (something that none of them will ever have experienced before) in their hostels by March 2008! Right now we are \$65,000 below our fundraising goals for construction. This is the cost of constructing the cafeteria. Without a cafeteria, our first 80 students will have to eat their meals in their classrooms or in their dormitory rooms and their food will have to be prepared outside in a makeshift grass shelter. If you or anyone you know would like to assist us with a tax-deductible donation (in addition to donations of cash, we can accept donations of securities) towards the construction of the cafeteria, please see our website at [www.MalawiGirlsOnTheMove.com](http://www.MalawiGirlsOnTheMove.com) or e-mail me at [cjohnson@pearsoncollege.ca](mailto:cjohnson@pearsoncollege.ca)

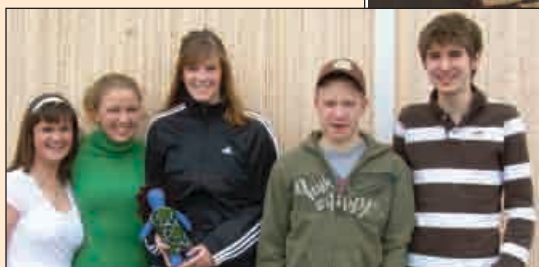
230,000



# APU DONOR RECOGNITION

Without our donors, this dream, along with the dreams of hundreds of Malawian girls, would still be a pile of bricks laying on donated land. We cannot begin to thank the many individuals, families, businesses, school classrooms, youth initiatives, Interact Clubs, and Rotary Clubs that have joined us in making this dream a reality. A business from Edmonton donated the money required to fix the access road from the local trading center right to the school site. The funds for two of our buildings, the first classroom block and the first girls hostel, have been donated by families. The bricks for 4 of the internal walls were donated by two elementary school classrooms in Dawson Creek. An Interact Club held an International Dinner and Silent Auction in their high school in Courtney BC to raise funds for bricks. Groups of friends have joined forces to provide scholarships for our first class of students. Bags and dolls brought back from Malawi were sold by Pearson College students to raise funds for construction. A business in Edson provided the funds for constructing our Storage Shed. A group of women Rotarians in Dawson Creek ran their own fundraiser, providing scholarships to 3 of our future APU scholars. The building of this school is truly an international partnership in all

possible senses of the word. Unlike many projects that are built using large grants, the construction of this school is happening brick by brick, one dollar at a time, and from the ground up both here in Canada as well as half a world away in Malawi. Our support network continues to grow, making our financial foundation for this project stronger with each new donor that joins our APU team. **For more detailed information about our donors, please see the Donor Recognition page on our website at [www.MalawiGirlsOnTheMove.com](http://www.MalawiGirlsOnTheMove.com)**



## Grade 3 Students Raise \$ 1,200



In her pursuit to help Memory build her school, Christie is busy making presentations at schools, and to anyone interested in

hearing the story.

During her visit in Dawson Creek, Christie told Memory's story to the grade 3 - 6 classes at Notre Dame Elementary School. The students were absolutely spellbound as she described what life is like for children, particularly little girls, in Malawi. The children were so touched by Memory's struggle to start her own school that they decided, as a class, to help Memory build her school. Later, the teacher told Christie, that after they heard her presentation, the class spent the rest of the day planning what

they, as grade 3 children, could actually do to help. It was their idea to hold a fundraiser by selling paper bricks for 5 cents a piece. Each paper brick was past-



ed to a wall in the school. In total, the class raised almost \$1200, enough to build two walls at APU.

The newspaper came to take pictures and interview the students. The school challenged other schools and groups to also build a wall.

Following are some quotes from the students:

*Gabrielle Dagasso:* We started doing our

brick wall because we had a great presentation by Christie Johnson, then our class wanted to help the Malawi girls.

*Jaden Mah:* I want to do this donation because I want to help out.

*Chloe Graham:* Some Malawi people starve and can't afford buying food or going to school. We can help by giving money to help build the school. We can show them we care.

*Sydney Feschuk:* I wanted to help the Malawi people because I saw how sad they were and I wanted to help them feel joy in their lives everyday.

*Allison Blocka:* I wanted to raise money for the Malawi girls because it isn't fair that just the boys get to go to school. Everyone should be allowed to go to school.

*Kate Bernier:* I have enjoyed watching the wall of bricks grow, and it makes me feel so happy when I see it.

*Mike Howe:* I want to help them so they can go to school like me.

## Pearson College students visit Memory in Malawi to learn more about Girls Education - by Christie Johnson

This summer I had the privilege of taking four very special students from Pearson College to Malawi with me. Over the past year, these students had shown a true commitment and desire to learn more about the issues surrounding girls' education. They came to meet with me on numerous occasions, wanting to know more about Memory and Atsikana Pa Ulendo and what they could do as students to help. In the end, they formed their own Youth Initiative and called it 'Yamba' which means "To Start" in Chichewa, Malawi national language. At the end of the school year, these students were offered a travel grant from Pearson College and the result was a full month of traveling together, and learning from one another.

Memory and Henry were wonderful hosts and spent much time interacting with the students and helping them to understand Malawian culture. For me, this was a profound experience that can only be described as the coming together of two different worlds. My students in Canada actually had the opportunity to meet, work with, and learn from my students in Malawi. Seven years ago I would never

have imagined that Memory and I would still be working together towards our common goal of educating girls and that our two worlds would start to become so connected despite the fact that half a planet lies between us!



### Yamba Youth Initiative

is led by a group of students from Lester B Pearson College in Victoria, BC who are passionate about the issue of education. The Yamba Youth Initiative was formed in February 2007 to support Atsikana Pa Ulendo. In June 2007, four Yamba members traveled to Malawi to learn about the importance of girls' education first-hand.

### Yamba's Goals

- To raise awareness about Malawi, HIV/AIDS and the importance of girls' education.
- To encourage schools and groups to fundraise for Malawian girls to complete secondary school. All funds raised will go to Atsikana Pa Ulendo for scholarships.

### Yamba's Mission Statement

Youth to youth. Passion to action. Providing opportunity through education. Yamba strives to inspire youth to work together to further girls' education in Malawi.



An Tran, Marie Abbott, Evelyn Balsells, Jason Schweda



## Birth Announcement!

Teloni ("Let it be" in Chichewa) Mdyetseni was born at 12:00 pm on June 13th.

Teloni weighed 10 lbs at birth and both mother and son are about as happy and healthy as it is possible to be.

*Welcome to our world little Teloni!*



Excerpts from **“Malawi, A Reflection”** by Marie Abbott  
Pearson College Student

I visit the school site and construction is happening everywhere around me. The red of the bricks contrasts against the trees and sky - this is really happening! Even though there are so many problems here, there are positive changes: individual people are making choices for the better... a group of people united for a common cause: promoting and making girls' education a reality.

Christie, one of my teachers at Pearson College, Memory, a Malawian teacher and Henry, Memory's husband have allowed me to become a part of their dream to build a private girls' secondary school, 40 km West of Lilongwe. They have an organization called Atsikana Pa Ulendo - Girls on the Move - and my goal this year, along with three other Pearson College students who travelled to Malawi with me, is to raise awareness and funds to support Atsikana Pa Ulendo. (See more details at the end of this document)

We get a tour of the school site: land donated by local village chiefs. There are more than a million bricks. Each has been hand made. Dirt is mixed with water. Moulds are filled with the

mud and flipped over onto the ground, revealing two new bricks. They dry in the sun by day then bake in flames by night. These bricks are building a school. The man in charge of construction tells us that the first classroom and residence will be complete by January 2008.

While in Malawi, I learned so much about education - which is why I went. But I also learned about people, about challenging myself and re-evaluating what I think and how I act. I learned about good intentions and harmful results... about taking the time to talk to someone: ask about their life... furthering my understanding and respect for differences. I learned from meeting people who are living their dream of education, who believe in something and are making it a reality for young Malawian girls.

Christie told us about a candle ceremony she did with a group of students in Malawi. Each girl held a candle, and



Evelyn with the children



Marie with her host sister

one by one, each was lit. She told her students that education is the only thing that no one can ever take from you.

You can choose to keep the knowledge you gain to yourself, or you can let your light shine and take what you know to improve your life and the lives of those around you.

My experience in Malawi was one of learning, challenge, frustration, joy and most of all, hope. There are so many problems - but there are also people who are dedicated to helping in big and small ways. Now that I'm home, I want to share the stories and the moments that made my experience what it was. I want to take the opportunities I am so lucky to have and let my light shine.

-Marie-

## BRICK BY BRICK SCHOOLHOUSE PROJECT

By donating money to be put towards the purchase of bricks, you can be an active part of our construction process.

- \$100 (2,000 bricks)
- \$500 (10,000 bricks or one wall)
- \$2000 (40,000 bricks or one classroom)

If you are interested in making a donation to Atsikana Pa Ulendo, please contact [support@malawigirlsonthemove.com](mailto:support@malawigirlsonthemove.com). Tax receipts will be issued for all donations.



## ***The statistics are terrifying,***

not only for those of us that read about them, but also for the young girls in Malawi that live them every day of their lives. They live with the knowledge that 57 per cent of the 25 million people living with HIV and AIDS in Africa are women and that that figure rises to 80 per cent among young women between the ages of 15 and 18. And these girls do know! Even the young girls in remote villages in Malawi know that they have a very high chance of dying once they have a boyfriend or once they have sex. They know and they are scared. But their fear cannot pay their school fees. Their fear cannot buy their school uniforms. Fear cannot satisfy their hunger or pay for medicine for their sick parents.



value and they are less likely to take risks. More importantly they are less likely to need to take risks because they see a future filled with hope and happiness. They know that they are learning how to take care of themselves so that they will not be dependant and therefore at the mercy of their future husbands. Over the past many years, Memory and I have witnessed this transformation in the 24 young women that were our former students and whom we have been supporting since their school closed in December, 2000. Now, 7 years of education later, they are working in their own communities, breaking down many of the stigmas that surround AIDS by confronting issues such as early marriage and "sugar daddies", and by encouraging women's social and economic empowerment. Out of their

## **EDUCATE GIRLS and FIGHT AIDS**

*"The main problems we girls face in Malawi are powerlessness and poverty". - Witness Kamanga -*

This combination of circumstances forces them into sexual activity at an early age, \_they lack the power to say no or to insist on condoms to protect themselves. Often they are forced to barter sexual favors to survive. The decisions they are forced to make in order to survive in the short term are ironically the equivalent to a death sentence in the longer term.

*"It is true that it would be much easier for girls to protect themselves if they just had the opportunity to go to school. If a girl is confident, it's easier for her to say no to sex. She may have the courage to go for HIV testing. She might have the power to insist that her boyfriend go for testing."*

- Sellina Malaga -

Educating young women like Witness and Sellina, is widely recognized as the most effective weapon to combat poverty and the spread of HIV and AIDS in Africa. When girls are educated, they marry later, have fewer children and their incomes increase. They have a goal and a plan for their future. They see the worth of protecting themselves. Their lives take on meaning and

own income, these young women are helping to pay the tuition for their younger sisters, build homes for their ailing and aging parents, provide money for food during times of famine and act as role models that girls and women are worth educating, are capable of leadership and are capable of great things. These girls **DO NOT HAVE AIDS!** They're education has provided the protection they needed to grow into the powerful women they have become.

Educating girls offers a lethal threat to HIV and AIDS in Africa. If we are going to beat the spread of AIDS - and we must - we have to invest in the young women of Africa.

*Sponsor a Girl  
and Fight Aids*

