

Don McMath Foundation

Newsletter

www.donmcmath.org

info@donmcmath.org

12th May 2003

Dear All

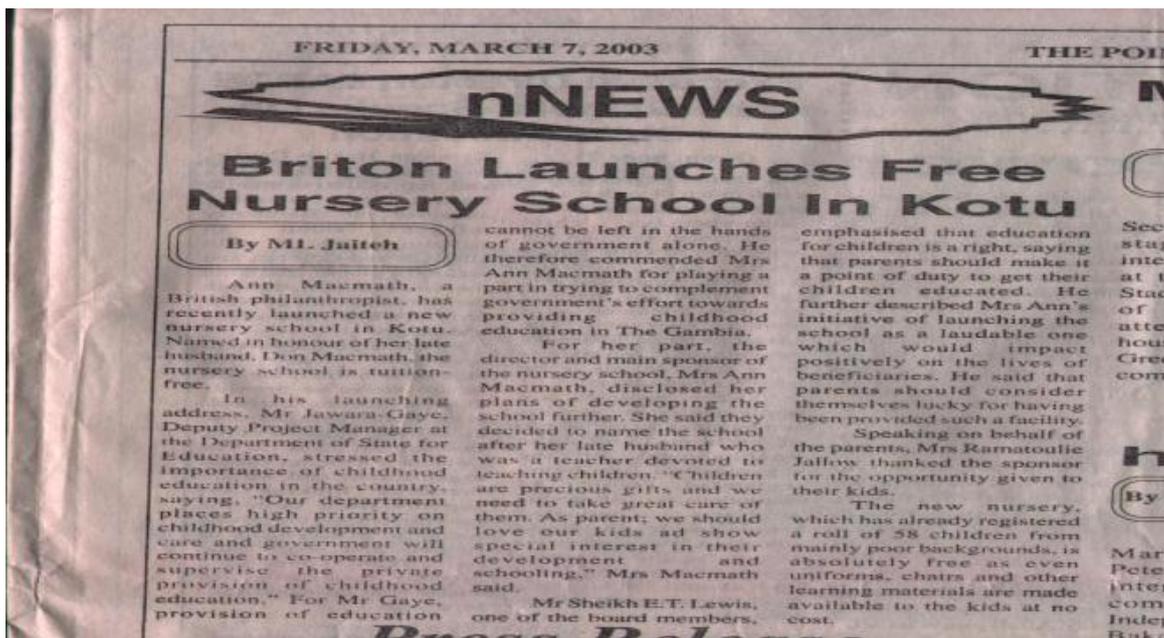
Since the last newsletter I have been preparing the new class. However I made a big mistake with the new desks, they were very tatty, but some of the parents came in and banged in the nails, cut down the legs as they were too long, rubbed them down & re-varnished them. The new teacher for this class is called Therese, and has had several years experience in teaching in a church school in the Gambia.

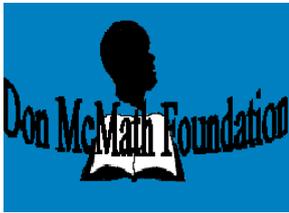
I attended the wedding of Malin the teacher of our first class, which was an experience as it was a Muslim wedding. It was attended by mainly women except for male members of her family. Her husband had a separate celebration at his compound. About 1.00am her husband's friends came to collect her to take her to her husband and I understand that the party went on to 4.00am, but as I had already been there for seven hours I went home.

Judy McMath came up with a lovely idea, of giving birthday cards to each child. It became obvious when I was registering children that most parents did not know when their children were born, so now on the child's birthday they get a card & the class sings them Happy Birthday, so each child has a special day.

The second class of 25 children opened on 28th April, we now have 55 children at the school. We are still looking for more sponsors for the next intake of 15 later in the year, so keep passing on the information and sponsor forms to your friends and relatives.

We thought that you would all be interested in this cutting from The Point (a weekly Gambian paper) about the opening of the school.





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Now that the school is up and running and (thanks to your sponsorship) it's future is secure for the next 3 years we need to start looking further ahead. Our major outgoing at the moment is the rent we pay for the school. By the end of the year we will also have run out of space in the current building.

Our new vision is to build a brand new school, which would have 3 infant classes and 5 primary school classes covering all ages from 4 to 12, we would also expect to run adult literacy classes in the evenings.

To be able to achieve this we will need a lot of help, we expect the total cost to be anything up to £50,000. We realise that we won't be able to raise this amount through personal sponsorship and so will be looking for corporate sponsorship and large grants from charities.

So far it looks like we may be able to get the land free from The Gambian government. There is a large field just round the corner from Anne's house which is unused and belongs to the government. After making enquiries they have agreed in principal that they would let us build a school on it at no cost for the land. If this is confirmed then we have 1 year in which to build a wall around the plot to get it established as ours. Anne has found more than 30 volunteers from the children's families who will be able to do all the basic labouring (including making the building blocks on site!) and brick laying.

We're not asking any of you for more money again (although if anyone wants to donate towards the building fund it would be gratefully received) we're asking for practical help. If anyone has any skills or experience in anything on the following list or knows someone who might have then please get in touch.

We will need help in the following areas:

Setting up The Don McMath Foundation as a registered charity in England (we are already set up as a charity in The Gambia). This is the first thing we need to do to take advantage of Gift Aid.

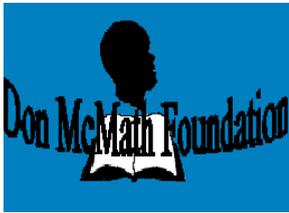
Architecture, - We will need to find an architect to help us design the school, (preferably with experience of building in Africa).

Raising Corporate sponsorship, - We would expect to have classrooms named after sponsoring businesses.

Capital Fund raising, - Anyone with experience of securing grants from large charities would be useful.

At a later stage we will need Plumbers, Electricians, Plasterers, Tilers, Painters and Decorators and Carpenters to help with the finishing of the building. Anyone with these skills who would be able to work for a week or two in The Gambia sometime over the next few years would get free accommodation from Anne but would have to pay their own fare (up to £250) and food (very cheap).

We realise that this is an enormous venture for the foundation to undertake and as yet have not set a timescale on it. We would appreciate any feedback from yourselves as to how we might achieve this.



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If anyone knows someone called J E Nichols who has started a standing order for the foundation then can they get in touch with us as I haven't received a sponsorship form from them.

If anyone wants a copy of the sponsorship and standing order forms then please let me know and I will either email or send them in the post.

Thank you all for your continued support.

Anne and Mick McMath

May 2003