

Don McMath Foundation

Newsletter

www.donmcmath.org

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The Don McMath Foundation Newsletter – 2nd December 2003

Hello All

Lots has happened since our last newsletter, we are now a UK Charity Commission registered charity, we are registered with the Inland Revenue for reclaiming tax, we are ready to open the next new class in January and we are ready to start building the new school.



Anne arrived back in The Gambia on 7th November, and met Sheikh Lewis (our Gambian chairman) for dinner on Sunday, to discuss what had been happening while she was in England.

We had two donations while she was away, one was in cash for £50 and the other came through Fatou, who does the school uniforms. Some of you have met her selling clothes on the beach, some of her customers told her that they had presents for a school, so she contacted Mr. Lewis. He and Fatou took them to the school & the press was present. Anne is hoping to get hold of copies of the papers. The box they gave us contained a lot of small toys, so Anne is going to give each child a present

at the end of term when they are having a Christmas/Koriteh party. (Koriteh is the Moslem festival at the end of Ramadan which took place on 26th November)

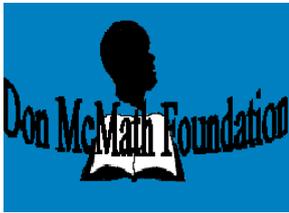
On Monday we had a staff meeting at the school. Malin our senior teacher is pregnant, the baby is due in January and she will have 12 weeks maternity leave, so Anne has asked Mr. Lewis to find a temporary teacher to replace her. The tailor also came to measure all the children for new school uniform. We now have reports for all Class 1 and 2 children which we will be distributing to sponsors over the next week or so.

In the afternoon Anne held registration for children who want to come to the school. We now have over 50 children at the school and the January intake will take us up to our maximum of 90. There will still be children on the waiting list after this intake, there are always more children than the school can accommodate, so it will be great when we get our new school built.

Tuesday saw Fatou and Anne at the capital, Banjul. They went to buy the material for the uniforms and Anne even persuaded the man to give us a discount as we were a charity. This was a wholesalers where everything is priced and you don't barter, so was pleased that we got a discount.

Anne then met the carpenter who will make our new desks. The last time we had desks made, they turned out to be a bit sub standard, so Barrow introduced Anne to this carpenter. It turns out that he is one of the parents, so will make the first few desks free of charge as a contribution to the school. I just have to pay for the materials only. However he is a poor man so I will pay him for his labour in future.

When Anne was traveling over she talked to two women on the plane (Laura & Carol) and told them about the school. They phoned Anne and took her out to dinner on Thursday and then on Friday morning came to the school armed with sweets. The children sang for them & they took lots of pictures, but they also very kindly gave us £60 for the tailor, to sew the new uniforms.



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We have engaged a new teacher called Anna Manneh to start in January for the new intake. She is a big jolly woman who has 16 years experience. Though she is not due to start until January she has been coming into the school to help out because she loves teaching children. On the last day before the Koriteh holiday the children were coming to my house to collect a Koriteh present for their parents - a tradition in Gambia. I (Anne) suddenly heard all this singing, so went outside to see that all the pupils were marching from the school singing a song about the Don McMath School that Anna had written and taught the children. (Lump in the throat moment) I think she will be a great asset to the school.

We also have a temporary teacher coming to cover for Malin while she is on maternity leave.



took a group picture of Class 2 and teachers, these and other photos will be put on the web site over the next few weeks.

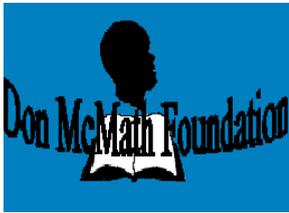
Judy and Mick arrived on 20th November and spent most of their time over the next few days at the school or at the site of the new school. They have taken new photos of all the Class 2 children which we will be sending out to sponsors over the next few days. They also some photos of the

While we were watching the Rugby World Cup Final in a bar called The Queens Head we got talking to the new owner of the bar who is English, it turns out that he is in construction in The Gambia and has agreed to give us some estimates for building the first parts of the new school. We have agreed that the first stages will be the building of a wall round the site, digging and building a cess pit and building a one story six classroom building which will house about 180 children (our current school building can only hold about 90 pupils). We hope to have estimates within the next week or so but we are confident that we have enough money in our building fund to at least build the wall and the cesspit. A couple of days later we visited a local school and spoke to the headmaster who gave us the name of the person who built his school two years ago, he is also giving us estimates for the new school.



On Sunday we visited the site of the new school and saw a large group of the parents armed with machetes starting to clear the site. The site is nearly two acres (nearly twice as big as we thought) but there is a dispute over one quarter of it, which is being dealt with by Mr Lewis. The parents made terrific progress during the day in spite of the heat and by 5.00 pm more than half the site was cleared.

While we were at the site we met the local MP whose brother is the Gambian High Commissioner in London. The MP is due in England later in December and we hope to meet him and his brother to talk about the school. The Iman from Banjul also called round and



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held prayers for the success of the school.

While we were in The Gambia we did lots of filming for a video which we intend to use for publicity for the school, eventually we hope to have a 10 minute video which shows the school as it is now, interviews with Mr Lewis and the local MP and the site of the new school. Copies of this will eventually be available to anyone who wants them at a cost of about £5, which will go towards the school.

As you are all aware we are now a registered charity, this means that if you are a taxpayer for every £1 you give us we can claim 28p from the Inland Revenue. If you are a higher rate taxpayer you can reclaim more tax from the Inland Revenue, as from April 2004 you can now also donate this to the Don McMath Foundation by filling in the relevant part of your self-assessment form. If you haven't already done so can you please return your Gift Aid Declaration as soon as possible to enable us to reclaim the tax.

Thanks you all for your continuing support, we'll send another newsletter out in January when we hope to report that work on the new school has started.

Anne, Mick and Judy McMath