

Don McMath Foundation

Newsletter

www.donmcmath.org

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The Don McMath Foundation Newsletter – 25th March 2009

Hello All

The new building is coming on really well. As I write this the walls and roof are complete and the materials for the doors and windows has been ordered. Hopefully when Anne returns from The Gambia in mid April the building should be weatherproof. Later in the year we will then get the electrics, plumbing, plastering and tiling done so the building will be ready to use in September 2010 when the Upper Basic school will open. This gives us the next six months to raise the £12,000 to £13,000 needed to complete everything. It's going to be a busy summer for us all.

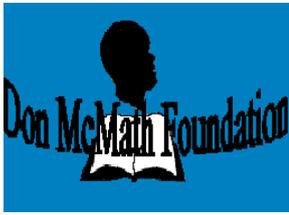


The important dates for our fund raising this summer are: Verwood Garden Party Sunday 5th July at 76 Manor Road, Bexhill Garden Party 6th September, note this will be back at Anne's house in Penland Road again. Verwood Charity Shoot Sunday 30th August at Manor Farm, Verwood and Verwood Rustic Fayre where Mick and Judy will once again have a stall on Bank Holiday Monday 31st August.

Many thanks to Tim Mowat, and Peter Evans for successfully negotiating the Sahara and minefields to deliver a 9 seater minibus for the school. What started out as a 9 seater has now turned into a 14 seater! It appears Sorrie, one of our masons saw some seats which had been abandoned but were in good order, told Sisawo about them and as a surprise



for Anne, they had them properly fitted in the vehicle. Now that we have a school bus we are starting to arrange trips. Grade 5 are currently learning about pollution and the environment. They are going to visit some of the polluted sites which Anne came across when doing registration, and then a paper recycling plant. Yes, there is one, it has been set up as a charity and they recycle paper to make exercise books. They also recycle plastic bags, but we are not sure what they do with them. Grade 5 formed a committee and picked a spokesperson to talk to the school about bring paper & bags to them. Grade 3 has got a trip to Alboko Nature Park planned.



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We are most grateful to Verwood Rotary, Chantry Community Primary School, Mike Keeley, Peter and Alex Killick of The Brazz Restaurant in Eastbourne and Richard Freeman and Roger Bruton from The Artful Bodgers who between them have donated a total of over £4,000 to the school over the last few months. This has nearly given us enough to complete the first stage of the build.

Anne would like to thank Adam Howard, for all the many hours he put in making resources for the school on the computer. One of the things he managed to do was make a half size man with labels for arms, mouth etc. Everyone was very impressed.

A few lines from Anne about how the registration of new children works:

In January, we open registration for the new intake. Parents have the opportunity to register their child, by going to the office to fill in a form. This usually has to be done by Ous, as most of the parents are illiterate. They have to bring some proof of birth e.g. a birth certificate or more usually a medical card. We have between 150 - 200 applications a year of which we take about 30 children.



I then start visiting each home. This is not as easy as it sounds, because there are no street names, so it is often a case of going to the area and asking around for the family. I look at the environment they live in and judge if they fall into our criteria. i.e. the family are too poor to send their child to school. If I think they qualify for a place, I take their photo and tell them to come to the school after Easter to see if their child has a place. I print out a couple of pages of small photos of the children I am going to take, so that when the parents come to the school if they see a picture of their child they know they have a place in September.

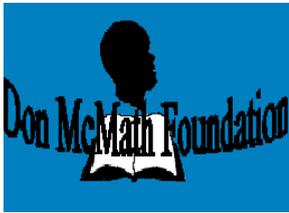
Apart from how they live, I have to keep on the look out for other things. Sometimes, the parents change the date of birth on the front of the medical card, however inside the card is the medical history and it is surprising to see that some children have received medical treatment two years before they were born. I don't blame the parents, because I know how desperate they are for the children to go to school.

I always visit in school hours, because if a child is not at home it is likely he is already in a school. If I suspect this, I will go back another day to see if they are at home. Also other people on the compound will tell you if they are at school.



I would like to describe a few places I visited this time. One was a tip, there was stinking rubbish, stagnant filthy water, flies & vulture and the children lived beside this. You wonder how any child survives past infancy living in such conditions.

I was given an address of one child as Kotu Quarry. I thought they must live near it. Wrong, they lived in it. When we arrived my driver told me we had to climb down the side of the quarry. I told him he had to be joking, as I had no intentions of breaking my neck. So the child and parents had to climb up to me, where I took the photo. Apart from anything else this



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place must flood in the rainy season.

Registration is the least pleasant of my jobs, not because I mind going to these places, but I am only too aware that for each child we take there are at least five who deserve a place I can't take.

However to finish on a positive note - every one of our sponsors is giving a chance to at least one child, who would have been condemned to a life of grinding poverty. Thank-you from all the children at the school.

Mr Secka who was teaching Grade 5 English has now left, his place will be taken by Mr Sumareh after the Easter holidays, Mr Colley will teach his classes until the end of term.

Everyone at the school passes on their condolences to Sisawo whose father died earlier in the year.

We would like to thank all the new sponsors who have joined us since the last newsletter in December. All but one of the sponsors was through current supporters passing newsletters and information on to their friends, the other sponsor just happened on our web site and decided to sponsor a child. We still need more new sponsors to cover the rest of the children who started last September. If you can spread the word among your family and friends we would be very grateful. They can pay monthly - £5.00 or annually - £60.

If anyone who currently receives this newsletter through the post is now on email could you please email us at the above email address so we can email you future newsletters as this will cut down considerably on our costs.

Anne, Judy and Mick McMath

March 2009