



The Don McMath Foundation

The Don McMath Foundation Newsletter – 21st December 2015

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Hi All

Everything is going well at the moment. As of January 2016 the school will have been running for 13 years. We would like to extend our thanks to all our sponsors for their support over that time. None of this would have been possible without you.

Anne received a letter from the pupils in their 3rd year at Nusrat (these are the first children that started at the Don McMath Foundation when it opened) I would like to quote a couple of paragraphs from it. "On behalf of our parents we would like to thank you for lessening their burden. Seeing our parents struggle with other things we cogitate what our lives would have been like. Would some of us be married? Would some of us be roaming the streets? Only Allah knows. It is because of the hope you built in us that served as an inspiration for us to start wanting to become something in society." The letter goes on to say what their ambitions are when they leave senior school next year. One wants to become a Journalist, one a writer, two want to take up nursing, one midwifery, one wants to study international relations, one to study economics We also have a future designer and an accountant. One of our pupils wants to study genetic engineering! After another two pages the letter concludes "Though we don't know all the sponsors we love them all and please extend our sincere gratitude to them"

Every year since 2006 a teacher, Dorothy Webster, has come over to the Gambia to help at the school for a few weeks. This is her report:

"I have just returned from what is now my annual visit to the school and it has been wonderful over the years to see the school and pupils develop. The hard working staff, led by Mr Jeng, have a clear aim that they want the school to continue to be highly rated. My connection started in 2005 with an accidental discovery while on walk about during a holiday. I came upon the school, was welcomed in and have enjoyed returning regularly since then.

During the four weeks, I was kept busy with working throughout the different stages and subjects and was always welcomed into each class by teachers and pupils.

Over the years I have accompanied different classes on various field trips as part

of their curriculum. Whether it be fishing, recycling or the post office, the children have an interesting day out of school and return with all sorts of new knowledge and experiences. This year Grade 8 had a trip to My Farm. This is a project which teaches children to grow crops and keep animals using sustainable methods for their own use and also to earn money. The theory learned in school was being developed here in a practical way and gave the pupils many ideas of how they could put these ideas into practice at home. They listened carefully to explanations, made interesting comments and



asked sensible questions and everyone went away with a view to trying some new methods at home and giving advice to parents. This project has many visitors and the school was complimented for the good behaviour and attention of the pupils. On my last day the children and staff gave me a warm send off and I have promised that I will be back."

Helen and Andy Wray came and gave a wonderful presentation about opportunities in Science to Upper Basic (G7 – G9). Our Children have a very limited knowledge of what job opportunities are available when they leave school. Most of the younger children will say they want to be teachers or nurses as those occupations are the only ones that they have any contact with. Helen & Andy are both scientists and talked about their personal journeys.

"It's always great to meet up with Anne, Mick, Judy and now Dorothy to catch up on what is happening at this wonderful school. This year we had an extra special opportunity to meet with Upper Basic and their teachers to give a talk on Careers in Science. And who are we....

Helen Wray –a background in chemistry having worked with everything from vinyl floor coverings to potatoes, Egyptian Mummies to peanuts, lasers, tanks and a few missiles; now working as a Chartered Health and Safety Professional.



Andy Wray – an engineer who was sponsored through University by Vickers Shipbuilding, working on nuclear submarines. Originally joined Hewlett Packard 33 years ago working on the CAD CAM side of things and has been there ever since in a variety of computer consulting roles.

We talked about our own work roles but also gave the students loads of ideas about the diverse range of science-based careers they could work towards. Andy shared with them that at their age he had always wanted to be an astronaut and it was that dream that had led him into science. Although he never got the chance to go into space, he explained how the grounding in maths and science had allowed him to experience a great and varied career.

I guess the best bit was our 'Spot the Scientist' quiz where the table groups became very competitive. The quiz was a set of photos of some of our 23 year old daughter's friends, many with fascinating scientific careers - Junior doctor, ion propulsion engineer, automotive engineer with Jaguar Landrover – all of these were girls. Some of the boys included a dancer, a call centre manager, a landscape gardener and a Costa Barista. You get the idea – not all scientists have to be male; not all scientists have to look like Joe 90. The students gave us a fantastic welcome and participated in the whole session. At the end, it was a pleasure to give some small gifts to Mr Jeng. Last year, when we asked if there was anything that he wanted us to donate to help with science in the school, he asked for a skeleton. Yes – we took a skeleton through Gatwick and Banjul security in our suitcase! It was an educational one made of resin but I hate to think what would have happened had they opened the case. Anyway there are now two Mr Jeng's at the school – the Head teacher and the new skeleton – fondly named after their Head by the students."

We also had a visit from Arthur & Elizabeth Wilson on their first trip to The Gambia. They donated some resources to the school, which are always welcome.



We have our first retiree at the school, Mr Jallow our French teacher is retiring at the end of this term. The school held a presentation for him at the end of term. Anne presented him with a retirement present from the Trustee's and management committee. Malen Gaye (Head of Nursery) presented him with a card from the teachers. Mr Jeng gave a speech thanking Mr Jallow for all his efforts over the years and Mr Jallow gave a moving speech about his time in school. There were a few tears from teachers and children alike.

We have been informed that for Grade 3 and Grade 5 exams held in 2014, that we came 15th and 7th respectively in the WHOLE of Gambia. This puts us in the top 3% of schools in Grade 3 and the top 1.5% of schools in Grade 5

Many thanks to Mark Bright who appeared on The Chase, Celebrity Special on ITV on 5th December. Mark named the school as his charity and raised £1,000 for us. It's the first time we've had a mention on national television!

Thank you Koos and Helma for all the goods they took out to the school and also for the great photos of the children (including this one of Mick and Judy taking the class photos).

Thanks to Shelley Grierson for keeping our Facebook page up to date. Also to Graham Cook for the gift of a digital camera for the school. Ous will now be able to record various events at the school as they happen.

During their trip Mick and Judy found the Gambia to be a much more vibrant place than it was when they were there last year. The tourists are now returning to the country in large numbers as the Ebola scare of last year has gone away. The locals that they met who were in despair last year and wondering how they would survive now seem to be back to making a meagre living.



Judy and Mick took all the class photos when they were over at the beginning of December. These have now been sent out to everyone who sponsor named children. If you haven't received yours then please contact Mick. If you don't sponsor a named child but would like a copy of one of the class photos the again please contact Mick. Unfortunately we didn't manage to get photos of the Nusrat pupils but hopefully Anne will be able to get these next term.

Thanks to the new sponsors who have signed up over the last few months we always need more! With the new intake in September and with a few sponsors dropping out we now have about 35 children needing sponsors. Please pass this on to anyone you think might like to sponsor a child, as Anne has mentioned in the past "£5 a month is only the cost of a bottle of wine!"

Please note the website address: www.donmcmath.org and the email address: info@donmcmath.org. You can also reach Anne and Mick via: anne@donmcmath.org and mick@donmcmath.org .

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

Thank you all for your support.

And a happy Christmas from Anne, Judy and Mick McMath – December 2015

