

# RDL Building Hope Society



*“If you think in terms of a year, plant a seed; if in terms of ten years, plant trees; if in terms of 100 years, teach the people.”*

Confucius

January 2014



The RDL Building Hope Society was formed when some students at Red Deer Lake School asked the question, “Wouldn’t it be great if we could build a school in Africa?” And so we did. This project was initiated as a way to help our Red Deer Lake School students learn that they have the ability to do anything they set their minds to. It has, of course, achieved that goal, and so much more. This is thanks to the great spirit of the Red Deer Lake School community and the generosity of people who have donated financially to RDL Building Hope Society.

Together, we, both the students and staff of the school and the official RDL Building

Hope Society members, have discovered that not only do we have the capacity to give generously, we have also learned to receive with grace. We have received gifts of understanding, of compassion, of selflessness and of abundance. We have discovered that we have so many more similarities than differences. We have learned that we all have the same dreams for our children – we want them to have the chance to become anything they want. We want them to dream.



The Building Hope Academy— A classroom for Primary students



First fitting for uniforms

## Message from the President

It is hard to believe that the RDL Building Hope Society is now in its fourth year of existence. As one of the founders and as President of this organization I felt that it was time to create a newsletter whereby the people who have so generously given of their time and

money to this organization can see what exciting projects have been completed and what incredible work continues to be done. And so it is with great pride that we bring to you this, our first ever newsletter. I thank you for being a part of this incredible journey, for

your gifts of time, money and support, and for encouraging both young and not so young people to dream.

Ashe Oling

Elizabeth Critchley  
President

## Our Partners

Our incredible partners in this venture are Merry Purcell and David Ole Nkuito. David Ole Nkuito was born in a rural Maasai village near Ewaso Ngiro, Kenya. The land borders the famous Maasai Mara National Reserve, home to one of the best and most famous animal watching and safari destinations in the world. David, who grew up in this land, is now a Maasai Elder ( and has the scars from his lion hunt encounter to



David Ole Nkuito and Merry Purcell

prove it!), and with his Australian wife, Merry, is the head guide and director at [Enaidura Big Step Safaris](#), a Kenyan company specializing in travel experiences in this region. More importantly, David and Merry are the co-founders of the Nairobi Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting the Maasai community through outreach to the

community widows and the children. In 2010 we were introduced to David and Merry through Rick Castiglione and they became our partners in this project. It has been through the tremendous efforts of David and Merry directing operations on the ground in Kenya that the dreams of RDL Building Hope have become reality.



Sponsored Students

## Sponsored Students

Between April 2010 and April 2011 the Red Deer Lake Community near Calgary, Alberta, raised \$21 000 for the RDL Building Hope Society to build two new classrooms onto the Enkare Ngiro School in Ewaso Ngiro, Kenya. These two classrooms house 85 students in grades 7 and 8.



Grade 8 Class With Donated Books

The grades of the students in these new classrooms have

dramatically risen since their opening. For the first time, students can see a possibility for education beyond grade 8. A high school education is not available locally for these students and the cost of one year of high school education, including room and board costs approximately \$1000 CAD. While this is not an exorbitant amount for Canadians, it is unfathomable for the families of the students who attend Enkare Ngiro School. Each year since 2011 the RDL Building Hope Society has sponsored two students (one male and one female) to continue their education to high school. These students are chosen on the basis of

their grades on their mandatory government exams, that are written in December of each year and that account for the entire mark of the students.

In addition to these students going to high school, many generous private donors have created a chance to allow other students to pursue a higher education. Currently there are 33 sponsored students attending high school through the RDL Building Hope Society. Even more exciting is that one student, Brian, has received sponsorship allowing him to attend university, where he is studying to become a teacher so that he can return to Ewaso Ngiro to teach.

## New School for the Little Ones

After surveying the community around Ewaso Ngiro, it became evident that over 95 young children, aged 4-6, were not attending the public school because of the great distance required to travel through dangerous



Clearing the land

elephant corridors. To help remedy this situation, 15 acres of land was donated by Kamishina Ole Nkuito (David)'s family to become the site of a new community school.

## Fencing the Property

The first job was to erect a fence around the perimeter of the 15 acre parcel of land to keep out unwanted animals. The women of the community proved to be the key players here, clearing the land by the hour with crude scythes and by hand. Many of



Building The Fence

these women are the widows being helped by the Nairoshi Foundation. RDL Building Hope Society once again went to work raising money and managed to raise \$15 000 to provide fencing and a gate for the school site.

## The Community School – Building Hope Academy

An additional \$30 000 for the construction of the 1st classroom for the young children, a teacher's quarters and a makeshift kitchen needed to be raised. Once again, generous donors and fundraising efforts at Red Deer Lake School accomplished this task. Construction began in early 2013 and the doors of the new school

opened in May, 2013. The school has been named 'The Building Hope Academy'. What a thrill! This one classroom currently houses close to 50 students. It is unique in that the children sit at tables to learn and they receive one healthy meal each day along with a snack.

Parents walk their children to and from school and are learning how to become involved in their children's education. In addition wash-room facilities were installed for both staff and students. None of the children had ever seen a proper toilet prior to this.

*The school has been named 'The Building Hope Academy'.*



# A Tough Decision

One of the mandates of the RDL Building Hope Society is that no child should be excluded from an education because of finances. Thus, when it was suggested that the families of these youngest children pay a small fee to allow their children to attend school, the members of RDL Building Hope Society were skeptical. However, we knew that a second mandate was that we would not try to impose our will, or our way of thinking on the very people we were in partnership with. It was our responsibility to listen. And listen we did. After much correspondence, we realized that it was the local people themselves who had requested the fee. It was their thinking that this fee would help to make them feel like true stakeholders and that it would help ensure the success of the school. We decided to try this for one year, tracking the attendance of the students throughout the year. After the first complete term, we are proud to announce that attendance has been almost perfect, that any families who needed help financially received it, and that the school is a resounding success!



Grade 7 & 8 Classroom



Registration Day for The Building Hope Academy



Meeting with Parents



The Building Hope Academy



## Next Steps: Building Hope Academy Classroom #2

No sooner was the Building Hope Academy up and running when it became apparent that more classroom space was needed. 95 students had been identified as needing a school and the first classroom could only house about 50 students. This led to the beginning of the construction of a second classroom in the summer of

2013. It is very close to completion and soon it will open its doors to more excited students. In addition plans are in place to donate more supplies to both the Enkare Ngiro School and the Building Hope Academy, and to provide teacher with Professional Development. Stay tuned...



The First Christmas Concert

We're on the web  
[www.buildinghopesociety.com](http://www.buildinghopesociety.com)