

REPORT ON 2013 TRIP

By Les Law, July 24, 2013

Kabala School for the Blind.

Our main goal this year was to complete the staff quarters at the School for the Blind. Fortunately we raised enough funds to do that and the team spent all week painting the place. Some work days were shorter than others due to the area needing painting. The pro painters will be finishing up. We mainly did the priming. Windows and doors are in, ceiling is in, toilets are on hand and the hole for the septic tank has been dug. A well has been dug but not cased and no pump in place.

Carissa, Nancy, and Cheryl spent the first four days of the trip visiting the other schools for the blind in SL. They started in Freetown, went to Bo, Kenema, Koidu, Makeni, and finished in Kabala. Their opinion is that the Kabala School is sort of in the middle, not as good as could be but better than others. All 3 spent time working with the Kabala blind students and staff while the painting was being done. Some of the other team members pitched in to help Cheryl, Carissa, and Nancy. Nancy stayed by herself for 5 days after the rest of the team left. She worked by herself at the School for the Blind and spent a day and a half helping at the Clinic. She survived, with the help of Abu, and got home safely.

Needs for the School are furniture for the staff quarters which was not included in the construction budget. All the furniture will be built locally so will not be too costly. They don't want to dedicate, or obviously start moving in, until furniture is available. Quotes are supposed to be coming soon but I am guessing \$2,500 to \$3,000 will be enough for basic furniture. The school needs a security wall which will be in the \$40,000 or more range and of course as soon as we finished the first staff quarters they said they need another one the same size. That is true but we have other priorities first. Nancy, Carissa, and Cheryl, are working to make all the schools for the blind more productive and meaningful. They are working with the Helen Keller group, which has a presence in Freetown, with some initiatives. They will be fund raising for some of those programs.

Heritage UMC High School.

Heritage/Colorado did not support Heritage/Kabala this year but we did raise enough funds from other sources to complete the first classroom of the 3 classroom addition started in 2012. Hopefully support from Heritage/Colorado will be available next year so we can do a lot of work on the remaining two classrooms. Somewhere around \$25,000 is needed to finish the 3 classroom addition. With the first added classroom completion the Principal wants to start the first Senior Secondary class, SS1. That may

be this Sept/Oct. Then in 2014 she will add SS2 and add SS3 in 2015. The school this year had around 500 students and will add more each year. Of course with more students and classes more teachers are needed.

The school is doing well and most of you know that Heritage had the most passes in the BECCE exams in the whole district to go on to Secondary School. This year all the JSS students at Heritage will have to go to some other school for SS. The Heritage "graduates" are complaining that their new schools are not as good as Heritage.

Hope and I were really pleased at what we saw at Heritage. Last year, 2012, there was a lot of dissension amongst the staff and between the Principal and staff. We attended a "fence mending" meeting, facilitated by Dorcas, to try and resolve some of the problems. The meeting seemed to be effective as many problems were discussed and brought into the open. However what we saw this year was amazing. The staff, Principal, and students, were so proud of their success that they were all excited and working as a team to do even better this year in the BECCE exams. The change in attitude was obvious in every one we spoke with. The 3 other secondary schools in Kabala are jealous of the success of Heritage and there is trash talk of Heritage somehow cheating. Not only did they take first academically, they were also first in the District track and field events. They are smart jocks. Success breeds more success. We were there in early June and they were already doing all night classes to study for the exams.

The road to Heritage has been graded and is smooth. While the road work was going on they used the road equipment to smooth out a soccer field and volley ball court. There is still some work to be done on both but the basic areas are there. They are nearer to the swamp and behind where the caretakers shack is located so closer to the village of Malaforia (sp).

As mentioned above the remaining classrooms have to be finished so that will be at least part of our goal for next year (2014). Shelley Harwell needs help with funds for her Heritage Scholarship program. She needs funds to continue the scholarships already in place and of course more are always needed. The government has still not issued official recognition of Heritage so no teacher salaries are paid by the government. Principal Daisy said there are 30 schools waiting for approval. The problem seems to be that there are not government funds available to pay for new teachers. As a result we are looking for support again for teachers salaries in the 2013/2014 academic year. We have been sending \$600 a month.

It seem appropriate to reward the existing teaching staff in some way. We talked with Daisy and she thinks awarding scholarships to some of the teacher to get their certificates would be appropriate. We had enough

funds to pay for one teacher to get his certificate this year. He paid one third of the cost and we paid 2/3 of the cost. 2/3 equals about \$200. We also paid to have the caretakers shack improved with new zinc roofing and siding and cement for the floor. He really needs a proper home. He has been there from the beginning when we started clearing land. His home will be much cheaper than the staff quarters at the School for the Blind. Daisy will inform us of the deserving teachers, probably some favoritism there, but we need to follow her advice. We will probably start a separate fund (from the staff salary fund) for teacher scholarships.

Perhaps we will be able to "electrify" Heritage. We have a donor willing to buy a generator for them and perhaps pay for all the wiring. We will keep you informed.

NarSarah Clinic

We continue to be pleased. The Clinic was a little weak due to Theresa and Peace both gone but it was still functioning with substitute staff and some new staff, plus some volunteers. The security wall is in place and looks good. It encloses the entire Clinic land area but still needs plastering, painting, and the razor wire installed. The entrance near the guest house is nicely done with steel fence and gates. The area is closed off around 6:00 at night and opened around 6:00 in the morning. There were two American volunteers, both young men (college students) living in the WAP guest house helping with the clinic, agricultural program, and tutoring Scholarship of Hope students and perhaps some CAI students.

The big news is that due to a generous donor there will be water purification equipment installed at the Clinic. Peace was in the U.S. mainly to be trained in the use of the equipment and the education classes that go along with the program. Theresa, Dorcas, Ali, and Dan, were also trained. This month Theresa, Ali, and Dan are with Peace, he returned in mid June, to set up the equipment, train more local people to run the program, with the goal of having a dedication and opening in October or November. When it is successfully running many in the area will have access to pure water. It will greatly improve the health of the area.

The Scholarship of Hope program managed by Hope is in need of funds for the next school year. If you have committed to support please renew that support for the 2013/2014 school year. Send funds to our address with a check written out to SEED. Contact Hope if you have any questions. The CAI program needs recurring support for their scholarship program also. The check is made out to SEED but sent to Ali and Julia Kamanda at 561 College Ave., #103, Lancaster, PA 17603. Contact Ali or Julia at bikostudios@gmail.com or jay3music@gmail.com

Other Places.

C.R.O.P. Orphanage (Abu's) is doing well. Their well is working and supplying water to the house and all its toilets. They have beds and furniture in all the rooms but one. A generator provides electricity. The children are doing well in school. Only one room remains to be finished. It will be the final bedroom but for now they are still using it as a storage room for the rest of their construction supplies. Their new project is to start a bakery. There is not one in the area and they feel it will provide long term income for the Orphanage. They are seeking support along with the usual support for scholarships. The Orphanage is what it is today because of support given from many OC team members.

Kabala UMC Primary School is ready to be opened this school year. It has been built with support from Minnesota UMC OC Ministries.

Kabala UMC Church has the roof structure in place with plans to have the building finished this fall. It is being built with major support from SonRise UMC Church in Pueblo West Colorado. SonRise also supports the Street Children School in Makeni and funding for the Scholarship of Hope at NarSarah

Special Needs Students/Makeni UMC Secondary. The special need is mainly students with polio. They have been receiving scholarship support via Serving Sierra Leone but they really need support for food. Contact Hope if you feel you can help in this effort, either for scholarship funding or money for food.

2014 Trip

There may be many teams going to Sierra Leone in 2014. We are hoping that many students will go from Heritage High, a group of youth and adults will be going from SonRise UMC Church in Pueblo West, Hope is putting together plans for a teacher workshop for all schools in Kabala and has some volunteers going, and we hope to have several members of University Park UMC going on a team. Scheduling for next year will be tight. Our intent is to have a tentative plan put together by November and start asking for responses by end of December.

More later. Contact Hope or me any time if you want more information or have comments. If you have leads for funding we will greatly appreciate receiving that information.

Les

P.S. Just to clarify. SEED is the U.S support for NarSarah Clinic and all of its' programs, including Scholarship of Hope, Women Against Poverty, Malnutrition Feeding Program, Staff, Supplies, and Equipment needed at the Clinic, the Agricultural Program, CAI program, etc. Serving Sierra Leone

was formed to collect and distribute funds for other programs in Sierra Leone including Operation Classroom, Heritage UMC High School, Kabala UMC School for the Blind, C.R.O.P. Orphanage, other scholarship programs, etc. Serving Sierra Leone serves as a conduit for accounting and transparency for established, or new, programs but does not have any specific programs of its' own at this time.