

Mama Makeka House of HOPE

Mama Makeka House of Hope (MMH Hope) is a charitable Non-Governmental Organization incorporated in the State of California under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code in memory of Mama Makeka Rebecca Tshimika.

MISSION

The mission of MMH Hope is to promote, advocate, and support Health, Education, and Community Organizing/ Empowerment Initiatives among the underserved populations of Africa, the Caribbean and Central San Joaquin Valley, California.

VISION AND SCOPE

Mama Makeka House of Hope is committed to the advancement of existing services and assisting in the development of new initiatives.

GOVERNANCE

Mama Makeka House of Hope is governed by a Board of Directors that has the power to manage the property, programs, affairs and business of the Organization, and any other functions which are permitted by the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws of the Organization.

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*Where There is Always Room
for One More*

See our website: www.mmhhope.org

Faces and Voices of Mama Makeka House of Hope: Sonja Wiens, Board Member

For the first time in 2005, I traveled to Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This was a trip I had dreamed of for the past 30 years. We visited potential projects and partners that Mama Makeka House of Hope was establishing in these two countries. I was attracted to the work related to children. I have seen in the past the pain children endure in life due to family abuse or because of the system the adults set up for them. The little child in me and my many years of teaching kindergarten always lead me to where little children are and this trip was not any different.

I watched children at Queen Elizabeth Children's Home play in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, and noticed how staff was struggling to find small household items they needed for feeding and clothing these children. In Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, I observed Tecla take care of children whose parents had died of AIDS and how she used the little personal resources she had to assure the survival of these children. She was committed to the future and the potential these little ones had in spite of the obvious obstacles of not having parents or living in a country where the population had the feeling that they did not have any more reason to hope for a bright future.

While in the Democratic Republic of Congo, I was introduced to Mama Jacky. Although living in a very difficult economic environment, she has adopted thirteen children who were abandoned in local hospitals. I saw how these children were maturing and how much energy they displayed just because they had been provided with a family environment in which to grow up. In Kajiji, I felt like I had come home. This is a place I had heard of for many years through Pakisa and now here I was walking through the hospital, visiting schools and realizing the sense of isolation people have felt for several years due to economic hardship and war in the country. On several occasions, I felt I was sitting on holy ground, and I knew I wanted to continue to be a part of the lives of the people I had heard of and who have now become truly an intrinsic.



March—May 2007

Mama Makeka House of Hope Newsletter

From the Executive

Director's Desk

Much was accomplished in 2006 as the Youth Theater Program got off to a strong start in Fresno, medicines were contributed to Kajiji hospital, three houses were completed for orphans in Zimbabwe through our "One Child at a Time" project, and our connections and projects in DRC continue to grow.

In February I spent one wonderful month in Congo and Zimbabwe where I was able to take members from the board and several partners of MMH Hope.

In this issue, we report on the trip and the outcome of the trip as shown in the priorities set by the board for the upcoming years.

Also in this newsletter you will find an updated report on Rebecca Allen, who sadly had to leave Zimbabwe ahead of schedule due to the political situation in the country. She shares with us about her time there, and the projects she participated in with our Zimbabwe partner, Tecla Mugomba.

In the "Voices and Faces" section of this edition we hear from board member Sonja Wiens who shares with us about her involvement with MMH Hope.

We are looking forward to all to come in the upcoming years, and we thank you for being part of it.

Pakisa Tshimika

Board Members and Partners Visit Zimbabwe and DRC



A team of 12 members traveled to Zimbabwe and Congo in January and February 2007 with Mama Makeka House of Hope. Included in this team were board members Drs. Gail Newel and Roger Fast accompanied by his son Noah, a team of seven from Northpark Community Church, and Linda Allen who joined the team to visit her daughter, Rebecca, in Zimbabwe.

The team began the trip with a short stay in Zimbabwe, where they were able to see the three houses that have been built through our "One Child at a Time" project. Linda, Sherrin Massie, and Mike and Martha Faggionato had the opportunity to stay in Zimbabwe longer, and were able to meet many of the children in the program and also participate in several meetings with the National AIDS Council.

In Congo, the team was split with each member working in their area of expertise. In Kajiji, Roger and Gail worked in the hospital, Dave explored the possibility of further involvement at the Kajiji Bible School, and Sherrin, Mike, and Martha visited the local schools where Martha conducted vision screenings and Mike and Sherrin met with teachers and visited classrooms. In Kajiji, Noah also had the opportunity to see for the first time the place he was born.

Pakisa, Gail, Roger, Noah, Wayne Massie, and Connie Proctor with her 14 year old son, Jordan, traveled to Eastern Congo to visit the Walungu health zone. Here they visited a hospital treating women victimized by sexual violence, and also met with women in Cagala to hear their stories of sexual violence and abuse. The trip to Eastern Congo gave the team an opportunity to explore strategies for future involvement.

MMH Hope has been invited to partner with projects in Eastern Congo to work on the issues of trauma healing with victims of sexual violence, and also with weapons destruction and transformation. The weapons destruction and transformation project will encourage militia members in this area, which has been heavily victimized by violence, to turn in their weapons in exchange for a bicycle or roofing materials. In turn the destroyed weapons will be used to make agricultural tools.

The trip gave a chance for Pakisa, who accompanied the team in both countries, to provide an opportunity for team members to walk beside those whose lives their contributions are touching. As an organization, we found areas that allow for further and more focused ministries. It is our hope to organize these informational trips once a year.

Pakisa Tshimika, Melissa Graybill, and Rebecca Allen

Board of Directors Set Priorities for 2007-2009

As Mama Makeka House of Hope moves forward as an organization, we are beginning to focus in terms of our outreach priorities. The last two trips to Africa and the attention the Youth Theater Project is getting in Fresno led the Board of Directors on its regular meeting of 24 March 2007 to define its priorities for 2007 to 2009 as follows:



Pakisa being interviewed by the Press in Kinshasa about MMH Hope involvement in DRC

1. **Kajiji Health Zones in DRC:** We will provide continued support that will involve not only provision of medicine and supplies but also guidance in dealing with management and policy issues. MMH Hope will work with other partners such as Northpark Community Church in the area of education. Furthermore, MMH Hope hopes to partner with an Italian NGO in developing a reference laboratory for both Kajiji and Kahemba Health Zones.
2. **Walungu Health Zone in South Kivu:** This is a region that has experienced serious consequences of war, especially sexual violence against women. MMH Hope involvement will include trauma healing for women who have been victims of sexual violence, micro-loans to help these women start businesses and become self-sufficient, and a weapons destruction and transformation project. The weapons destruction and transformation project will encourage individuals and rebel militia members to turn in their weapons in exchange for a bicycle or roofing materials. A machine to destroy the weapons has already been purchased, and in turn the metal from the destroyed weapons will be used to develop agricultural tools.
3. **Kinshasa Mama Makeka House of Hope Center:** Logistics for lodging and transportation is a nightmare in Kinshasa. As more and more people are beginning to join Mama Makeka House of Hope in its ministries in Congo, hosting volunteers can become an impediment to involvement in some of these ministries. The center will consist of two buildings to serve as guest rooms, a reference library, conference, reading, meeting, and reception rooms, restaurant, and offices. MMH Hope is also seeking donated vehicles to assist volunteers in their travel, as transportation in Kinshasa is very difficult. The center will provide safe and convenient lodging for volunteers, income generation opportunities, and jobs for the surrounding community.
4. **Zimbabwe.** Although our involvement in Zimbabwe has recently been limited due to political issues within the country, we continue to keep Zimbabwe as a priority. Two pieces of land have been secured in the Victoria Falls area to build two community centers which will offer Bible studies, AIDS education and counseling, sports, tutoring, and a safe place for youth to spend their time. We wait and pray for doors to open in Zimbabwe for us to continue in our "One Child at a Time" project and the building of community centers there.
5. **Fresno: One Story Yet Several Chapters:** In February, members of MMH Hope met with the Fresno Parks and Recreation Department to see what Mama Makeka House of Hope could contribute to our community here in Fresno. With the success of working with McLane students to confront the issues of violence in our community through our Youth Theater Project, it was decided that a similar Fresno wide program would be beneficial. Together with Randall Cooper and Mary J. Fitzpatrick of Fresno Parks and Recreation, the idea of "Fresno: One Story Yet Many Chapters" was born. Partnering with Fresno Parks and Recreation, Kaiser Permanente, Fresno Pacific University, and several area churches, the goal of this project is to target the issues of violence and health care in each of Fresno's unique areas through the performing arts. Youth and young adults will be given the platform to write plays, music, and poetry, and essentially tell their stories. We are excited about the opportunities this project will bring to our local community, and the partnerships that we are building.



Rebecca on Leave From Zimbabwe

In February I returned from Zimbabwe, where I spent four months working with Tecla Mugomba in our "One Child at a Time" project. I set out on my trip with the goals of building homes for families caring for orphans, working side by side with Tecla in her daily ministry, and helping Tecla find ways to deepen and grow her ministry.

Although my time in Zimbabwe was cut short due to increasing political tensions and the government's extreme disapproval of relief efforts, I feel as though much was accomplished.

We thankfully were able to complete three houses for three very deserving families in December. The first house was completed the day of the first heavy rain of the season. Moments after the roof was completed the skies opened, and the area where the family of 11 had been sleeping was, within minutes, flooded knee deep. That night, the family was able to sleep not only in a dry home, but in a dry home that was theirs. The other two homes were both completed on December 24th, just in time for Christmas.

Besides the construction of these homes, I also took part in village and hospital ministries, food and clothing distributions, and was able to assist Tecla in starting a feeding center for 250 children from the nearby villages. Plans for two community centers to offer children a safe place to play and learn are also underway, as two pieces of land have been secured for that project.



Although I am not physically able to be in Zimbabwe at the time, my heart and prayers are still there with the people. Due to the increasing risks towards humanitarian efforts, most of MMH Hope's work there has been put on hold, but we continue to search for ways to effectively and safely offer our resources. Tecla continues in her ministry as she can, and is in the process of registering as a local NGO, which will make it safer for her to move forward.

Political tensions in the country of Zimbabwe continue to rise daily, as they are a people oppressed by the greed of a power stricken government. Zimbabwe is undergoing many struggles, as they have been facing food shortages for several months, and all public doctors were fired in January, leaving the already overcrowded hospitals even more desperate.

As we are forced to take a less active role in our Zimbabwe project, we ask that you do not forget the people or the country. Please pray for Mama Makeka House of Hope as we continue to look for ways to bring encouragement and hope to Zimbabwe.

Although our efforts may seem ever so small in a time that makes us feel so helpless, we must step back and see how God holds true to his promises. I am reminded of a verse, found in Isaiah chapter 43, verses 18-19: "Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland."

This verse is one of Tecla's favorites; a verse she reminded me of often while I was in Zimbabwe. As the sun rises on each new day, we must look forward to the new ways God is working and moving. Living in an oppressed situation, it is easy to dwell on yesterday's tragedies and sorrows. Instead, we must hold tight to God's promises.

Our project in Zimbabwe is appropriately called, "One child at a time." If you look at the overall picture, of all the tragic situations, it can be overwhelming. But if you look through the perspective of any of the 19 children who now take shelter in the three homes we have built, God has made a way in their desert. God knows each of his children by name, and through obedience, we are making a difference, one child at a time. *Rebecca Allen*

