



Horizons Children's Centre

"Forward Ever, Backward Never"

HCC Girls Scholarship Award Winners for 2007/2008

Issue 9

April 2008

By Codie Tredway

Among HCC's proudest accomplishments of 2007 is the new Girls' Scholarship Program. While primary school in Ghana is technically free (fees are covered, but parents must still pay for books, uniforms, etc.), the cost of secondary school and beyond can be prohibitively expensive, particularly in a rural community like Sandema.

For girls, continuing education is especially difficult as they are saddled with the bulk of household chores and often lack the time to dedicate to their studies. Yet, Ghana is a perfect example of the es-

sentiality of educating women and the reasoning is quite simple.

Beyond the notion of education as a human right and a means of empowerment, mothers do almost all of the work involved in raising children in rural Ghana. In most cases, development of the child rests on the mothers' knowledge, on everything from proper nutrition and appropriate disciplinary techniques, to practical and scholastic knowledge. The success of the generation to come therefore relies a great deal on the education of women. As many of our applicants quoted: "To



Belinda Aburinya, one of five HCC Scholarship recipients

educate a boy is to educate one person; to educate a girl is to educate a whole nation."

The HCC's Girls' Scholarship program provides money for girls who wish to continue their studies but lack the financial support for fees and other education costs. In addition to financial need, the

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"Research shows that for every additional year of education beyond primary school, a woman's income increases by 15%, her vulnerability to AIDS drops significantly and her risk of dying in childbirth falls."

~CAMFED Website

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Girls Scholarships Continued From Pg.1

criteria includes high academic achievements and a demonstrated commitment to the local community.

This year we had over 40 applicants. 16 girls were selected for interviews. At the inter-

views, each of the girls displayed remarkable determination. In the end, we awarded five girls with scholarships. Each has already accomplished great things at school and in their communities, and we are delighted to help them further

develop their talents. The HCC family congratulates - **Belinda Aburinya, Felicia Azebayam, Cynthia Ayarieiel, Dorothy Ageteba and Cecilia Akanbonabisa** – our 2007/2008 Girls Scholarship winners!

Overcoming Odds

Shortlisting applications from so many excellent candidates was certainly a difficult task. Winners like **Felicia Azebayam** distinguished themselves by writing with passion and conviction:

I am a girl of 20 years of age. I have lost both my parent since 1997. If that was not enough, those relatives who are close to my parents could not take care of themselves neither to take care of an orphan like me. It is hard for the relatives of my late parents to understand that education is very important. As a result I decided to leave my village Doninga and came down to Fumbisi where I am living now. This was not just, but where I can provide my daily bread and some income for my school fees. I started trading since when I was in Primary five (Grade 5). It became a habit of gathering more coins for my school fees whenever we were on holidays that is not all, since I do not have any relative at Fumbisi, it is the

trading that I do which help me rent a room at Fumbisi which I consider as my house. But now I am found in the secondary school I find it difficult simply because it is only on holidays time that I can do trading.



Felicia Azebayam, a deserving winner

In the side of education, I personally have the zeal for education but due to the fact that there are so many crisis on my way so far as my financial road is very soft, I would have been

at somebody's house by now [married] if I had remain in my village up to this time since sivilization is still far from their reach because they only think that the place of a woman is in the kitchen and that is a waste of resources of sending a girl to school, without knowing that in the world today women play a vital role both in the home and in the society as well. Girls who will surely become adults are the soul behind the upbringing of children. If this great social responsibility rest on women, then girls who are in fact future mothers should be afford every opportunity to go through all levels of the educational ladder providing they have the ability and the requisite qualification to do so. What can we the helpless and poor needy girls also manage to reach the ladder, except to lean against an opportunity like this for a helping hand. –Felicia Azebayam (unedited text)

Spotlight on Bea: Manager of the Sandema Resource Centre

Kip Clifton, a former Peace Corps volunteer, was featured in our last newsletter for his tremendous success in setting up the first computer centre in Sandema (with profits going to HCC). While dedicating himself to new projects in a different Ghanaian town, he makes regular trips to Sandema to support the SRC staff in their work. He recently interviewed the manager of SRC and submitted this article.



Bea poses for the camera outside the SRC

Starting out as a secretary and currently enjoying her role as manager, Beatrice Akanvaribeam has been with the Sandema Resource Centre since its doors opened in 2006. From the beginning, Bea has always made time to converse with customers about Sandema news and gossip, making them feel at home in the resource centre. Her open manner has kept them coming back and endeared her to customers and colleagues alike. Despite her busy schedule, we managed to catch up with Bea and ask her a few questions about the center, her easygoing manner and how she manages to keep up with so many things at the same time.

Kip: First off, thanks for taking time to answer a few questions. I'm just going to start out with a big one here: How

has SRC affected your life?

Bea: It's been great! It's really helped a lot. Financially, medically...everything. Now I'm able to help my extended family. Before they were helping me.

Kip: That's really good to hear. Let's talk a little about your management style. How would you describe yourself as a boss?

Bea: People respect me because I'll do all the tasks at the resource centre; nothing is below me. I never get annoyed and you can never offend me! I think being a secretary earlier has helped me understand the job so I know what to expect from them. But the biggest thing is that I'm not above anything or anyone and Gladys and Joyce respect that.

Kip: What about all the added responsibility that came with the job as manager? Do you like it? Did it take a while to learn the ropes?

Bea: I worked with Eric for a while so I knew what to expect from the beginning. I'm used to all the daily reports and back then I was doing some of the bank deposits so basically, it wasn't a difficult transition.

Kip: With added responsibility comes extra pay, what do you do with your extra earnings?

Bea: I'm helping my family a lot now. Since I'm the oldest one in the house there is a lot of pressure to help everyone. I've started saving "small, small". I have a bank account and I put a little in each month.

Kip: That's very wise. As you know, SRC and HCC are the same organization. What kind of impact do you see the two having on the Sandema community?

Bea: HCC has meant a lot. Especially to the boys that live there. I hope it never collapses and I'm working hard to make sure SRC does well!

Kip: Just recently your daughter was able to experience a little of that HCC/SRC crossover when she went to a football match in Tamale with all

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Spotlight on Bea Continued From Pg.3

the boys. Tell us a little about that.

Bea: She really enjoyed it! It is not something she would have done without HCC. She came

home at 3 am but was still so excited from the match!

Kip: I think that's all the questions I have, would you like to add anything?

Bea: I just want to say thank you to HCC. Without them I wouldn't be in this position. It's really helped Sandema a lot!

Development with a Difference:

Operation Groundswell 2007 by Jeff Davis

Jeff Davis, David Berkal and Jonah Brotman spent the final months of their university careers planning Operation Groundswell 2007. The Coordinators worked hard to ensure a positive and rewarding experience for their team of volunteers while in Sandema.

It all started on an evening like any other. My housemates Joffre, Jonah and I swapped travel stories, laughed and reflected on how our travels to the developing world had changed our respective lives. That evening a seed was planted that ultimately grew into our leading a troupe of students to visit the boys at Horizons Children's Centre last summer.

Although tentative and doubting at first, we became committed to creating an innovative, new, non-profit way to connect youth in the developed world to those in the developing one. We aimed to offer a backpacking-style experience,

at a bare bones cost, that would provide authentic person-to-person contact with communities in development.

Our 13 fellows came from all backgrounds. Different nationalities, different majors, but all with a keen desire to explore, experience and help. With everyone paying their own way, Operation Groundswell 2007 shoved off in mid May for a six week journey. After a brief stop in the southern Ghanaian city of Kumasi, we continued north to Sandema.

We were given a warm and hearty welcome by the boys of HCC, who were ecstatic with such a large contingent of foreigners. The raucous welcome included the HCC welcome song, prayers and dancing. We were immediately impressed by the energy, honesty, inquisitiveness, selflessness, and helpfulness of the HCC boys. The way they play, help each other, sing and pray together reminded us all that



David Berkal and Jonas share a smile

happiness can be found in ourselves and each other.

For the next four weeks we helped where we could with the construction of the new HCC buildings. Groundswellers were also encouraged each to work on a personal project, through which each of us could help out in our own way. The results ranged from murals and AIDS workshops, to reading help and tire

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Groundswell Continued From Pg.4

swings, to steel nets constructed to replace the bent sticks used as soccer goalposts by the boys. In the end, the whole experience was planned and executed by people under 22 years old. All involved walked away from the experience with a sense of achievement and a buoyant heart.

In an ironic evolution in local development, the boys of HCC, despite their obvious hardships, rank among the best students in Sandema. It turns out that, instead of doing farm chores after school, the boys study together and have extra

classes. Ambitious and intelligent, the boys are profoundly dedicated to the family of HCC.

In our journey there were many possibilities for failure. In the end, it was the ready help and positive attitude of Jeanette Menezes, Joe, and all the boys that made it a success. Thanks, readers, for your continued support of HCC. **YOU ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE!!!**

As you read, Operation



Jasmyrn Richardson with Matthew, Martin and Awudu

Groundswell 2008 is gearing up. To join us, check out www.operationgroundswell.com and on Facebook.

How You Can Help

We are often asked the question, "What can I do to help?" There are various ways that you can support our ever growing program. These include:

- Monetary contributions – donations can be made by cheque payable to The **Stanley Francis Foundation c/o 5-3062 Lake Shore Blvd. West, Toronto, ON M8V 4C9**. The Foundation issues tax receipts for all donations received.
- Organize a fundraiser (see page 6 for ideas)

- If your company has an annual **United Way** campaign to which you contribute through payroll deductions, you can direct these funds towards Horizons Children's Centre. The **United Way** gives you the option of directing funds to any registered charity in Ontario. If you are interested in making contributions to Horizons through your workplace **United Way** campaign, you may indicate this on the form. You will need to specify the name of our umbrella organization, the "Stanley

Francis Foundation" and also write the following charity number: **86964 7347 RR0001**.

- Volunteer with HCC in Sandema...please check our website under "How to Help" for more information about applying to be an HCC volunteer or send an e-mail to jeanette@horizonscentre.org
- For information on donating books and other items to HCC, please e-mail us at info@horizonscentre.org

Fundraising... Fantastic

Fundraisers are a great way to support Horizons. In addition to generating funds, fundraisers also create a broader awareness of what we do and get more people interested in and involved with HCC. Thanks to the following dedicated individuals and organizations whose creative ideas resulted in some great fundraisers in 2007:

Lesley Smeaton ran the Ottawa Marathon – friends and family pledged money to HCC to support her in this milestone challenge.

Laura Donovan, a former HCC volunteer, set up an Amazon Wish List with great story-book titles and asked colleagues, friends and family to purchase books for the kids in Sandema; Laura also organized a Movie Night at her school with proceeds for HCC.

Assaf Weisz organized an event at a downtown Toronto nightclub with music and corporate-sponsored prizes and donated the profits to Horizons.

Guy Chencinski and his class at the University of Guelph planned a multicultural event in Guelph, featuring foods and music from different countries, with raffle proceeds and donations for

HCC.

Alfred Francis and his colleagues with TCDSB organized their annual Trivia Night in support of HCC.

Maya Francis organized a "Civvies Day" at her high school, Senator O'Connor, where students paid \$2.00 towards Horizons to come out of uniform to school.

"Students were gratified that they could see exactly where and how they would be making a difference. It especially moved us to know that many of these kids were not that far in age from us. We are honored to have been a part of the magic." - Maya Francis

The boys at the **11th Oakville Beavers Colony** filled 20 shoe boxes for the kids at HCC. Each shoe box contained a letter for a child at our Centre and various small gifts like crayons, toy trucks and socks.

The Oriole Fraternal Bridge Club gave up their weekly coffee and deserts for a month and donated the money to HCC.

8-year old **Benet Avery** requested donations to HCC instead of gifts for her birthday party. According to her mom,



Edible cookie invitations designed by Benet and her mom for her birthday

Susan, "For her annual birthday celebration for the past three years Benet has asked for donations to charities instead of gifts. This year she has really taken an interest in the kids at HCC. Codie, her sweet cousin, has been at HCC for the past five months. Benet feels she has everything she needs and would love to see other kids have the things she has."

Benet drew pictures of her and one of the boys, and Susan made cookie invitations. The Averys also used this stitch pattern to create practical and environmentally friendly loot bags.

As Susan explains: "In these days of excess it is nice for kids to understand that they don't need so much stuff. Too much stuff makes too much waste. Time is the greatest thing to give. A party to celebrate and enjoy time with those who love you is the best gift of all."

Life and Volunteer Work in Sandema

by Paola Bartolacci

Paola Bartolacci volunteered at HCC for 6 months. Among her many contributions, Paola spearheaded the Girls' Scholarship program. She is currently completing her Bachelor of Education at the University of Western Ontario.

As I reflect on my time spent in Ghana I am filled with many fond memories, memories that I hope I will never forget. The tiny town of Sandema, rich with warm people and smiling faces that are always eager to help the "white lady," the bluster of market day, the strange smells that eventually become comforting, and of course the mad rush to the Bolga bus, that was always "coming soon."

These are a few of the everyday memories that come flooding back. Although precious, these memories do not compare to those that I have of HCC and the time I was lucky enough to have spent with the amazing children. Everyday brought a new and fulfilling challenge, from cooking and showering, to teaching lessons to the boys, and of course trying desperately to score a goal while playing soccer with some of the best players I have ever played with!

I initially thought I would be a world of knowledge for the boys, however, I quickly realized that **THEY** would be a world of knowledge for me. Opening up new ideas and perspectives I would never have seen on my own. The children at HCC are all so special; they truly are a family and care about one another. It was inspiring to see the kindness they have for each other. They sleep, eat, and bathe, go to school and play together. Seeing how they interact with one another was humbling.

The children are lucky to have a great mentor whom they all look up to, Joe, the Program Coordinator, who is an amazing person. Joe has a way of connecting with people that is unlike anyone I know. It is apparent that the children really respect Joe and strive to become successful like him.

Because I have a passion for education I decided to focus on reading skills and comprehension with the boys. Each week, each boy was to read one book to me and we would talk about the book together. After doing this they would get a star by their name! They loved this idea and they knew there was a reward for them at the end of my stay. The boys told me that



Paola and Daniel Sr. smile for the camera

this exercise made them feel confident; they felt more able to pick up a book and read it. Hearing that was such a wonderful feeling, I felt as though perhaps I **HAD** taught them something!

Also during my time at HCC, I was able to help organize the first HCC scholarship for girls. I was fortunate enough to be able to visit all the schools in the Builsa district and encourage girls to apply, emphasizing that grades were not the only factor in determining a recipient for the award. This program took some time to take off but I am so proud to have been a part of its process.

Anyone who visits HCC will be met with great warmth. The children at HCC are truly blessed to be a part of the center; this becomes evident after spending any amount of time there.

HCC's New Smiling Faces by Codie Tredway

Horizons has an open-door policy and we are always ready to accept new children into the home. Usually, children are referred to us by family members who are struggling to care for them. In 2007, HCC welcomed Silas and Moses Jr. to the Centre. And, just two months ago, Francis became the youngest member of the family. Here are a few "little known facts" about the trio:



A new energetic personality joined the HCC family on February 6th. Francis is a bright-eyed three-year old who was living with his older sisters and blind grandmother. Francis was certainly scared when he arrived at HCC, but he was instantly calmed and doted over by an army of HCC boys and staff.

Needless to say, it didn't take too long before the smallest new member of the family was smiling and laughing constantly. We will encourage Francis to stay in close contact with grandmother and family, and visit them as often as possible. Francis has already learned a bit of English (his favorite word is "toffee") and he loves to colour!



Moses Jr. joined his older brother Christopher at HCC in September 2007. He had been living with his mother in Sandema in a traditional mud house. This past rainy season, his mother became unable to support him when floods hit Sandema quite hard, and the rains destroyed their house.

Moses Jr. and his mother had to resort to sleeping in a local school. To allow her son a more stable life, Moses was sent to live at Horizons. Moses Jr. has settled in very well, and now owns one of the brightest smiles at HCC. He loves to read and always puts in an extra effort with his schoolwork. Moses Jr. has a very positive attitude in life, and has been most welcomed at HCC.



Silas joined the HCC family this past August, all the way from the southern city of Takoradi. Takoradi is one of Ghana's commercial hubs. Silas was living alone with his father who was working often, and was not able to provide adequate care for the growing boy.

Silas spent many days sitting at home alone, with nobody around to ensure he was attending school. His family decided that Silas should move north to his home village of Sandema.

Since he moved into HCC, Silas is now attending school regularly, and always has a friend (or 20!) nearby to play and grow with.

Our Trip to the African Cup of Nations 2008

Codie Tredway took a well-deserved break from her amazing HCC volunteer work, and visited family in South Africa over Christmas. She returned just in time to meet the kids in Tamale for the Africa Cup of Nations game, an excursion sponsored by the Tredways and their extended family.

On the morning of January 27th 2008, the boys of HCC woke up to what they thought was a usual sleepy Sunday. Instead, to their surprise, Yaw told them that they would be taking part in the current pride and joy of their country, the African Cup of Nations, Ghana 2008. This football (or soccer) tournament is a fight for football dominance on the continent. This year, Ghana took great pride in hosting the Cup.

Unfortunately I missed the bus ride to Tamale, where the match took place, but I can tell you talking on the phone to Joe from the bus was virtually impossible due to 23 electric voices in the background. I met up with the boys in Tamale, and was so happy to see the huge smiles on their faces. The boys were unusually silent as we got our first looks at the



The HCC family poses with Kip (far right) outside the Tamale Sports Stadium

inside of the brand new Tamale stadium. I remember Matthew said to me, "This doesn't seem real. I feel like we are still watching a TV."

After the utter excitement died down a bit, I think the boys did actually take in the second half of the first match (Angola vs. Senegal). The second game was between South Africa and Tunisia. By this point, there were even a few friendly bets flying around on what the score would be. At the end of Game 2, you could see the signs of a day filled with so much excitement, espe-

cially in the faces of the little guys. Great memories had been made, as we all took one last look at the field and got ready for the 4-hour bus ride back to Sandema.

We arrived home after 4am, and all climbed into bed (except for Mark and Daniel Jr. who bathed and got ready for school!) thankful for the amazing day. I think this event gave the boys that much more pride in being Ghanaian, and gave them the irreplaceable feeling of really being a part of something that is so meaningful to them!

Introducing...The HCC Children's Library

By Codie Tredway



Joe and Aki stock the shelves of our new library

With three large suitcases full of books and a new wheelchair for Yaw, Aki Kita was ready for action when she hit Sandema at full speed this month. Aki is a Japanese student who has been living in Toronto for the past 6 months. In a great twist of fate, she heard about HCC through her host family, and was instantly compelled to volunteer with the centre.

Having spent a great deal of time volunteering with elementary school libraries in Toronto, Aki got the fine idea to set up a library at Horizons. To find books to bring to Ghana, Aki put up posters and talked to various friends in Toronto.

She managed to gather over 400 donated books! Special thanks to Sondra Nicol, Elaine, and St. Bruno School Library, St. Denis School Library, St. John's School, Howard Public School and FIA Adventure School Counselors.

"We all hope they will see the value and importance of reading, and take a proactive role in their own education by picking up a book and enjoying."

The selection of books range from brand new, to classic, fiction and non-fiction. There are books to suit almost any



Codie and Aki with new library sign out board

interest and reading level. A key part of Aki's plan is the precise way in which the books will be labeled and organized. HCC is saying good-bye to the



The boys take advantage of the new library

jumbled bookshelves of the past, and welcoming 'the new order' that Aki will bring.

Aki and the HCC staff hope that this new library will encourage the boys to embrace a love of education and reading. We all hope they will see the value and importance of reading, and take a proactive role in their own education by picking up a book and enjoying it. In the near future, HCC hopes to open up the library to other local kids and adults too! We are exceptionally proud of all of the hard work Aki has done! Thank you very much to Aki Kita!

If you would like to send books to our library, please send us an email at info@horizonscentre.org.

Joe Abobtey – HCC Program Coordinator

We've said it before and we'll say it again...HCC's ongoing success is a result of our amazing Program Coordinator. Below, Joe reflects on the past year, as interviewed by Codie Tredway.

What are some of your proudest achievements for 2007?

First of all is the children's education in 2007. All of the children at HCC are performing very well. I am also very proud of the Girls Scholarship program. I hope that in 2008, we will open it again for more needy girls, and continue the process. In the resource center this year, with the help of Kip, Jeanette and Derek Menezes, we now have a better system to help keep everything recorded on paper.

I will also extend my gratitude to Jason [Peace Corps volunteer] who can always be called upon when I need help with things in the centre. The Board have been working very hard for the centre this year. We have come together as a team, and are working so well together. I was once again happy when Clancy and Codie came together to the center. The kids are very happy.



Joe and Benedicta outside HCC

How do you feel you've changed/grown in your role as Program Coordinator?

1st December 2004 I started with HCC. I was Assistant Program Coordinator. In 2005 we had construction going on. The work was very hard. I had to do that labor work, and also my office work. I learned a lot, and it was completed successfully.

In July 2006, I became Program Coordinator. I usually take time to run the center correct with the financial and administration work. And also the household work. I participate in all of these things, to make sure things go well. The way I think to do work...when people see you are working very hard they will respect you

more. I thank God for the energy every day to perform my duties. I have learned that there are problems everywhere. You have to learn to deal with it. Minor problems are not problems, and this I have learned from the centre.

What ideas do you have for building the program in 2008?

With 2008 we will try as much as possible to add more seedlings and water at our new site so we'll have shade. I think in 2008 we will make sure the new dormitory has been completed. By 2009, we will have to overcome lots of problems to finish the centre. We need to get a vehicle to go to school. The school is far. With everything we will need to take one step at a time to complete different missions. One mission at a time. And we will need to get more workers in the center.

We have a new volunteer coming to set up a library. I want to keep putting education first. The kids will love to read more books in the center. Books are so important for their English and speaking. They will be able to write good essays. I want to have more time to spend with the kids, pay them more attention. To help them to develop well.

Last But Not Least...

It's hard to believe that a full eight years have passed since I met a small group of streetchildren in Sandema. HCC today looks and feels so different from the storefront verandah where I would gather with the kids each morning.

Today, we've doubled the number of kids under our care, set up the Sandema Resource Centre to provide computer access and training to the town, established a vibrant volunteer program, and this year, piloted our Girls Scholarship program. In 2008, we will focus on building up our children's library (training kids as librarians and helping children in the community expand their worlds through reading). We will also continue with the construction of our permanent home at our new site. With each passing year, we are finding new and meaningful ways to help the wider community of Sandema.

Our program expansion is a direct result of the widening network of support for HCC. Donors that reliably and faithfully give each year enable us to carry out our initiatives with confidence. New donations and the many kind individuals who organize fundraisers allow us to think bigger and create fresh, innovative programs. Volunteers like **Codie Tredway** who spend months working tirelessly at HCC, take on huge responsibilities (like this newsletter!) and put our plans into action, with the leadership and support of our excellent staff in Sandema.

Fueled by the positive energy and generosity of so many people around the world, HCC's ongoing success is both humbling and inspiring to my family and I, and we thank you deeply for your support.

Sincerely,

Heather Menezes
Executive Director



Horizons Children's Centre

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Email us at info@horizonscentre.org

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