

Action Lesotho

Action Lesotho, 32, The Mall, Tralee, Co. Kerry. Charity No: 17838

Newsletter No 2: August 2010

Dear Supporter,

We bring you the second Action Lesotho quarterly newsletter. In this issue, there are articles on our good friend Paddy Fay, who was the Irish Ambassador to Lesotho, updates from some of the Action Lesotho projects and volunteers, a profile of staff member Popa Seako and an article by Dermot Walsh about a trip of a lifetime to visit a classroom built in the memory of a dear associate of his Dr Bill Mangan. We hope you enjoy the newsletter and look forward to the next one in November.

Term as Irish Ambassador in Lesotho ends for Paddy Fay

Eileen O'Leary

Paddy Fay @ Pippa Kearon



In July, Ambassador Paddy Fay left Lesotho with his family last week after a hectic round of receptions that were held for him by government Ministers who wanted to personally thank him for his five years of dedicated service in Lesotho.

It was evident at the final event in his own home surrounded by family, friends, NGOs and government officials that Paddy Fay has been an exceptional Ambassador for Ireland. The Embassy staff took the opportunity to thank him for supporting them in their training as many of them are now studying for their Masters. Paddy, as we in Action Lesotho know him, has been a wonderful support for all Irish volunteers in Lesotho; opening up his home and giving all visitors a traditional Irish welcome.

Paddy spent the past five years taking Lesotho into his heart, learning Sesotho, respecting his Basotho colleagues and ensuring that he learned as much as possible about the culture and history of the country that he now sees as his second home. Colleagues in Lesotho will miss his encouragement and support but will see him back in Maseru to celebrate Christmas in true Basotho style. Action Lesotho would like to thank him for his untiring support, for his visits to Maputsoe with King Letsie III and the Minister of Education; he certainly put us on the map; we always had the opportunity to meet with decision makers in Lesotho to ensure that Action Lesotho has their support to meet challenges on the ground in Maputsoe. Kea Leboah Ntate Paddy – Kotso Pula Nala.



Photo (right): Action Lesotho volunteers, St Patrick's Day 2010, Irish Embassy, Lesotho, L-R: Isabel Hanrahan, Mpuse Raselimo, Pippa Kearon.

Africa Day in Limerick

Brian & Eileen Coates



On the 30th May this year, volunteers Brian and Eileen Coates, assisted by Action Lesotho Chairman, Paul Hanrahan, ran a stall at Irish Aid's Africa Day event in Limerick. Eileen and

Brian reported 'Africa Day was a good experience for us, there was plenty of interest from both adults and children and it was great for the local profile of Action Lesotho. Visitors to our stand included Father Tim Wrenn's family; a woman who had taught in Lesotho and knew St. Monica's Primary School; one or two who may be in touch about volunteering; a woman from Lesotho living in Ennis; and Lesotho Embassy staff, including one whose home place is in the Leribe area. I think people appreciated the personal story Action Lesotho could offer - the newsletter, photos from our own trip, quotes from some of the children at St Monica's and so on. The theme for the day was food security, and we

focused particularly on the role of Community Development Centres in the work of Action Lesotho with local groups'.



A few days after the event, Action Lesotho received a lovely letter from the Embassy of the Kingdom of Lesotho expressing their gratitude for 'the marvellous work that was done by Action Lesotho in showcasing Lesotho at the Africa Day celebration in Limerick. We were really delighted indeed'. We're delighted too!

Photos @ Eileen Coates

Setsoto Designs

Pippa Kearon

I was in Lesotho from January to June and it felt like a lifetime's journey despite only being a few short months. I am a board member of Action Lesotho and was over in Lesotho to ensure that a weaving gallery called Setsoto Designs received enough training to enter into the global marketplace with ease and with the very highest product standards. I would love to say that we succeeded in all these goals but that isn't the case. Setsoto Designs product quality is a cut above the rest of the many weaving companies in Lesotho at this stage and some of their new designs are breathtaking. The wool quality is second to none and the hue and sheen from it is being remarked upon by all who see it. The quality of the finished product in relation to the original artwork is of very high quality too. These aspects of the work all

reflect vast improvements and growth within the women weavers, management and owners of the company. We have also been investigating the possibility of utilising the Lesotho Enterprise Allowance Programme to build on the marketing materials, packaging and labelling, attend trade fairs and explore the selling power of the Internet. However, in terms of entering the global marketplace we have had to face the fact that the company are just not ready for that step at the moment. The company recently secured 4 major South African clients who, recognising the high quality of Setsoto Design's work, have placed substantial orders with the company. The winter has progressed well for the gallery and the ladies are beavering away to complete these new orders and feel happy to know that what they are currently making is already sold! Everyone agrees that the company can now consolidate what they've learned so far and we can move into more global based markets as and when they're ready to do so in the future. In the meantime we are trying to

revamp the website and hope that as many people as possible will (article continued above right)



Woman weaving @ Eileen O'Leary



Weavers @ Pippa Kearon

will visit www.setsotodesign.com to view the new floor rugs, wall hangings and more traditional type work which can be purchased via email or telephone.

A volunteer's report

Mary Ellen Bohane



Mary Ellen Bohane (pictured right with Katileho) is a student from Baltimore, West Cork, who is currently studying medicine. She spent 6 weeks volunteering in Lesotho this summer: 'Getting the opportunity to get involved with Action Lesotho has been

an experience that I know will stay with me for the rest of my life. It felt more like 6 days than 6 weeks as the time flew by. I arrived just before the schools were due to close for winter holidays. My working week was from Sunday to Thursday with most of my time based in St. Luke's preschool and St. Monica's primary school. For the first two weeks I spent my mornings at St. Luke's preschool helping out with Lineo [the little girl with a disability mentioned in the last newsletter] and giving a general hand to the teachers with lessons and feeding the children. Getting to see Lineo starting to laugh and smile and respond to the other children was a wonderful sight and experience in itself. I spent alternate Sundays at one of community centres where the feeding programmes for orphaned and vulnerable children are held providing entertainment and games for the children who attended.



Once the schools closed, my main work was running I.T. classes for the teachers at St. Monica's primary school. I worked with a group of up to 15 teachers who had varying levels of I.T. skills and I tried to achieve a common standard of knowledge between them all. The main objective of the classes was to educate the teachers and provide lesson plans that would assist them in being able to teach I.T. to their own students. Even after the short time that I spent with them it was encouraging to hear that one of these teachers was beginning to carry out her own computer classes with some of the St. Monica's students.

Time flew while I was out there and the people, the place and the culture left an overwhelming impression on me. Lesotho has taken a place in my heart and I know I'll be back'

A profile: Popa Seako

Colleen O'Kane



Popa, aged 24, is a key member of Action Lesotho's staff. He compiles regular reports on the Action Lesotho projects, keeps financial records and does many other jobs besides. When I

was in Lesotho in 2007, Popa was one of the first Basotho I met. Every Sunday I helped some boys study English for their exams and Popa was in that group. Fr Tim Wrenn, a priest from Limerick, ran the local mission of St Luke's and Popa was always around there helping – weeding the gardens, building fences, carrying water, washing cars. Even though Popa was still at school he also volunteered to help Action Lesotho. He is from a very traditional background – he was a herd boy and performs the traditional herd boy dances and songs. However, he speaks great English with a bit of Irish slang thrown in. His father was a staff policeman who died several years ago. Now Popa is the head of the household, living with his two younger sisters and his mother.

Popa and his mother were among the first people to receive a micro-enterprise loan from Action Lesotho. Popa bought, raised and sold broilers making enough money to repay his loan in one year. He is extremely skilful with his hands and can mend almost anything. Last year for his birthday the Irish volunteers that were in Lesotho at the time clubbed together to buy him driving lessons. In July this year he passed his test. This is a massive achievement which can open doors for him. He is studying for the ICDL (international computer driving licence) and has been passing all the modules with flying colours – mostly getting 'A' grades. He now runs computer classes in Lepoqong centre for the committee and the older children attending a feeding programme. He's always smiling and has been great company for the Irish volunteers over the last couple of years.

Photo: Popa on a trip with Action Lesotho staff and Flying Doctors, to visit a clinic run by Irish Aid and the Clinton Foundation. Popa had never been on a plane, yet ended up sitting next to the pilot and actually flying the plane!



Update: Qoqolosing



Action Lesotho is helping develop a community fruit orchard in the upland village of

Qoqolosing. 95 trees were planted in August and the project recently appeared on television in Lesotho. Ntate Mankoe (Action Lesotho's Project Manager) volunteers Pippa Kearon and Sarah-Jane Crilly, and the local chief all appeared in the TV programme. Also featured was the official launch of a solar-powered water-pump at the local school, which was partly funded by a generous donation from one of Action Lesotho's Kerry-based supporters, Teresa Moriarty.



Volunteer updates

✿ Sarah Jane Crilly (pictured below) has just brought one of her computer literacy classes to an end with a final exam for her students. All



the students received marks in the high 90s and have achieved a high level of proficiency.

Sarah Jane is to be congratulated on her achievement of running the classes. Better still is that she has written a manual that can be used by any group and she has identified some Basotho members of her classes who can pass on what they've learned to others. It's really great to see such a wonderful advance in the IT skills of the development committees with their IT skills. It opens up so many opportunities for them.

✿ The committee of the Lepoqong Centre (pictured below) send many thanks to Maggie-May Callaghan for funding the purchase of a DVD player and TV. The equipment was received with much singing and rejoicing! The committee are over the moon. Maggie May is a student in Limerick who volunteered in Lesotho this summer.



✿ Many thanks and congratulations are due to all the Irish students who spent time volunteering in Lesotho this year: Ciara Walsh, Isabel Hanrahan and Mary Ellen Bohane, Sarah-Jane Crilly and Maggie-May Callaghan.

Fundraising news and thanks

With funds running low, a special effort was made in Cork and Kerry to organise fundraising events. This is a snapshot of some of the events that took place: a Golf Classic organised by Patrick Scanlon at Castlegregory, a cake sale organised by Kathleen Tobin in Kilcrohane, flag days in various towns in Cork and Kerry, bag-packs in Killarney and Tralee, pub quizzes, a two-week long book sale in Bantry and many more. A huge thanks is due to the organisers and their teams of volunteers who made these events happen. We are also eternally grateful to those of you who signed up to standing orders to provide the much-needed ongoing funds for our feeding programmes.



Photo @ Patrick Scanlon

Online donation facility now available

Visit our website and you can easily use your credit or debit card to make a one off payment or set-up regular donations using our new PayPal facility at <http://www.actionlesotho.ie/whatyoucando.htm>



Call for old mobile phones

Your old phone can raise money for Action Lesotho! Each phone is worth €3.50 to us. If you have any old mobile phones please send them to Colleen O'Kane, The Craft Shop, Bantry, Co. Cork or the Action Lesotho Bookshop, 32 The Mall, Tralee, Co. Kerry. Why not organise a collection of used phones

amongst your friends or at your work place, school or college?

New local group

On Sunday 20th June, John Brennan, of the Park Hotel, Kenmare, kindly hosted afternoon tea at his hotel. In the beautiful grounds, Eileen O'Leary exhibited her new display boards highlighting some of beneficiaries of Action Lesotho's projects in Lesotho. As a result of this event, a new South Kerry branch of action Lesotho was formed. One of their first fundraisers is due to take place in September and we wish them all the best with that.



John Brennan (centre), Park Hotel, pictured with Action Lesotho Board members and Kenmare supporters.
Photo @ Grainne Goff

Standing order form

As we mentioned in the last newsletter, just €25/month will feed five orphaned and vulnerable children per month in one of our feeding programmes. Every week we hear about more children who desperately need our help. We are so grateful to any of you who can help us provide adequate nutrition for these children.

Standing Order Donation Form

Your banking details:

Bank name & address:

Sort code:

Your details:

Name:

Address:

Email:

Telephone:

Please debit my account no:

Account name:

Amount:

Beginning (ddmmyy):

Beneficiary account:

Action Lesotho, A/C No: 27016723
Bank of Ireland, Castle Street, Tralee, Co Kerry.
Sort Code: 90-58-38

Signed: _____
(authorised signature / account holder)

Please send this form to the address below or directly to your bank (if the latter please send us your name and address so we can acknowledge your donation):
Colleen O'Kane, Treasurer, Action Lesotho, 11 Glengarriff Road, Bantry, Co. Cork

Tax free donating: if you donate €22 OF MORE per month to charity you or your charity may be eligible to reclaim tax. Details at: <http://www.revenue.ie/en/personal/charities.html>

Action Lesotho, 32 The Mall, Tralee, Co. Kerry. www.actionlesotho.ie
Charitable Status Number: 17838

Dr Bill Mangan & St Monica's School

By Dermot Walsh (pictured below)

Dermot Walsh @ Ciara Walsh



There are some things in life which we cannot influence and one of those things for me recently was turning 60 years of age. One of the pleasant consequences of the event was a gift from my family of a trip to Lesotho to visit my daughter Ciara who was on volunteer work with Action Lesotho. It was always my intention to visit the country since we

first became involved with it through the 2003 Special Olympics world games held in Dublin & where we hosted the Basotho team in Cahersiveen.

I had a second reason to see the country & that was to visit the school rooms constructed to the memory of Dr Bill Mangan, a dear friend and a popular GP from Killarney, who died suddenly in 2006. After travelling 6000 miles it was a very poignant moment to walk the last few steps & to physically touch & observe the schoolrooms in full use & read the wall plaque:

"Dedicated to the memory of Dr Bill Mangan, Co Kerry, Ireland, funded by his family, friends & Irish Aid. Constructed by builders from Tralee, Bantry & Ha Maputsoe. Officially opened by Minister Of Education & Training Dr Mamphono Khaketla 8th of April 2009-Twinning of the Kingdoms Project"

The school is called St Monica's and these schoolrooms, complete with toilets, replaced a large army tent which had been destroyed in a storm. As I was directed into each of the classrooms I sensed the presence of a friend I dearly missed. It was an emotional experience for me & in my minds eye he was with me. I have no doubt he heard the senior teacher

remark the magnificent change the "Dr Bill Rooms" made to the 200 plus children & teachers who occupy them.

Before: tent classroom @ Eileen O'Leary



While walking away from the building & knowing that Bill was always the one to get the last comment in, most times

delivered in humour but nevertheless with a clear message: I could almost hear him saying that the ***** paint in the computer room has to go!! This country, where one in four suffer from HIV/Aids continues to be in desperate need of assistance. Many of the children attending the school have tragic stories to tell. The class rooms are functional & infinitely better than the homes they leave daily to come to try and acquire an education they & their parents believe has the capacity to change their lives for the better. The children I saw studying in the school get a sense of the realities of life & grow up much earlier than children of a similar age in Ireland.

The classrooms dedicated to Bill are a vibrant living memorial to him & to all who donated funds & to those who travelled from Ireland to physically construct the building. I offer my personal gratitude & thanks to Patricia, family and friends & my wish for you all is that in some way when you least expect it, a blessing will come your way in appreciation for your kindness.

As we approach his fourth anniversary may he continue to Rest In Peace in the knowledge that he is not forgotten by his family & friends, but also remembered by the students in a distant land who never knew him, but regard him as their hero.



New classroom @ Eileen O'Leary



St Monica's pupils @ Eileen O'Leary

Radio Kerry programme

Action Lesotho is one of the charities being featured on an upcoming radio programme about volunteers in Kerry. The programme is called 'In conversation with Weeshie Fogarty' and it will be broadcast on Radio Kerry, Wednesday September 8th 6.00pm to 7.00pm.