

Partners Across The Ocean 2008 Annual Report

Sisonke Sakha Ingomso

Building Tomorrow Together

It was on my very first trip to South Africa. A Khayelitsha teacher and I took a group of ten students out to eat after working all day with them in their computer laboratory. We stopped by Sa-Sa's Kitchen in the Site C neighborhood of Khayelitsha, needless to say I was the only one of my skin color in many miles! After enjoying a traditional Xhosa meal of umnqusho an older man came over and so badly wanted to tell us something but his command of the English language wasn't allowing him to get his point across. After several attempts he finally glanced to the students and drew both of his hands down near his waist then raised them over his head. "Lift them up", he said. I hope that in our own small way that we are honoring his request.

As I think back to that particular group of South African students I can say for certain that one is a college graduate, and six others are currently enrolled in higher education programs.

We began eight years ago as a school to school partnership program. We have since December of 2006 developed into a not-for-profit organization. In our first produced annual report we are presenting our history for the reader. This document will highlight three key initiatives while detailing the framework of our story.

Whether you are a long term friend to our project or a first time reader we are glad to see that you have picked up this annual report. Although we welcome you to read cover to cover we are more interested in your questions and ultimately your involvement; as the only way that we can continue to "lift them up" is with further support from all of you.

Partners Across The Ocean



Partners Across The Ocean



"If we are to lift Africa from her current circumstances, we will need a generation of learners that are gifted with curiosity about the world in which they live, and the tools to understand and shape that world."

Mark Shuttleworth

Inside this report

- Review the program history beginning on page 4
- Check out the Technology Initiative on pages 4 and 5
- See the Exchange Student Program on pages 6 and 7
- Read the Teacher Training news on pages 8 and 9

What is Partners Across The Ocean?

Beginning in the year 2000 a collection of Zion-Benton Township High School teachers, students, Rotarians, school administrators and community members have come together to do their part in improving the education of township students in South Africa. Through fund-raising events, a stream of regular donations, speaking honorariums, and a large grant from Rotary International, this program has been carried by its community support.

Located in Illinois the community of Zion is approximately one hour north of Chicago.



This educational project primarily serves the township of Khayelitsha, near Cape Town. Khayelitsha, which means "New Home", is an African Township in all its paradoxical meaning. Once a symbol of the oppression of apartheid these townships and their residents are the hope of the "New" South Africa. The home to people with great energy and a vibrant culture, but also a place with a very high rate of violent crime. Khayelitsha is the home of both squatter camps, with metal shacks and water taps but also more permanent brick homes, often for its long term residents. Its population, which is almost entirely from the Xhosa group, has been estimated at approximately 1.5 million.

Inside of Khayelitsha, the Partners Across The Ocean technology initiative has built computer laboratories in the township and provided them with updated educational software. The organization has also sent groups of Zion-Benton teachers to the township to work with their South African partners across the ocean. South African educators have also been brought to the United States.

Furthermore, the organization draws exchange students from the township and brings them to the United States to study for one year at Zion-Benton Township High School. Upon returning to South Africa the students are placed back into school and then proceed to the university level. The American organization also assists the funding of their university education and provides mentorship to them. Most of these students are sponsored by the Illinois Beach Sunrise Rotary Club or a Wisconsin group called Reflections International.

Partners Across The Ocean

Partners Across The Ocean NFP Board, Officers and Advisors Board of Directors

Cyranda Ahonen, Secretary

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Central Organizations Involved in Partners Across The Ocean

- *Illinois Beach Sunrise Rotary Club*
- *Zion-Benton Township High School*
- *The Shades multicultural student organization of ZBTHS*



“They have quietly established what is widely regarded as one of the most successful computer labs to be found in a township school anywhere in South Africa”

**Megan Lindow, Christian
Science Monitor**

Technology Initiative

To date our computer initiative, first established in 2003, has allowed over 3100 students to have access to technology. The donations have built two computer labs involving sixty personal computers, ten lap tops and fifty-five graphing calculators. This initiative allows students to surf the web, write email, access tutorial programs, type reports and many other technological skills that were once not possible for them.

The readers of this report are likely familiar with the

past history of Apartheid in South Africa. In the field of education people often mention a technological apartheid. This version of separation is the difference between schools with resources and those whom cannot get access to the world of computers for their learners. This so-called “Digital Divide” creates a significant disadvantage for township students who if they work very hard and have strong academic skills must still compete

on the university level with students who are well versed in technology. The cycle continues to the job market where the “haves” remain the “haves” and those lacking technological experience will remain sidelined.

I am often asked “what kind of difference has this initiative made in Khayelitsha”?

What I think it has done, is that the stu-



April 2000

Formation of a partnership between Zion-Benton and Esangweni Senior Secondary School



April 2001

Staff from Esangweni are brought to the US spending one week at Zion-Benton. Lap top computers and graphing calculators are donated to the delegates.

“I think it is remarkable that this computer experiment has remained viable for this long in a Cape Town township. I have seen more fertile ground fall barren with far less excuse. Graduates will be coming back to use the computers, and email, and the web, and will have jobs that will enable them as Alumni to take a keen interest in sending their children in turn to a school that has the facilities they were provided.”

**Andy Rabagliati,
Wizzy Digital Courier**

September 2001

A Community Celebration is held including keynote speaker Billy McKinney, NBA Executive and ZBTHS Graduate

dents have developed a keen interest in the computer. There has never been a time when I have visited that there were not more learners than machines in the room; often with a waiting line at the door trying to locate a seat. Often several students will be seated at each machine. Some of these students are connected with various computer clubs. These children have acquired a well-developed knowledge of the computer. They also have served as volunteers for other non-profit organizations in the installation of their labs throughout the Cape Town area. I was lucky enough to actually take some of these students on their work and greatly enjoyed their company as I witnessed first hand their knowledge and dedication to technology. This enthusiasm toward the computer will break down any real or imagined barriers that might exist. When these students enter the job market or attend a university, they will now have some technological skills, allowing them a fair chance to compete, effectively closing some of the digital divide.

The South African teachers match this commitment as well. At the recommendation of their teachers on a recent visit we organized lessons on the beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. Those teachers worked enthusiastically and asked many questions to show their interest in acquiring technology skills for their teaching.

" This certainly is one of the more successful international community partnerships I know of. Another township outside of Cape Town which we work closely sent students to UCT. They had all achieved very good results at school through sheer dedication by them and their teachers. However, where Computer Science was a compulsory part of their curriculum, they all struggled, because they had never encountered computers before! While there is support for them at UCT, the playing field remains uneven. Your project has certainly helped prepare those pupils for higher education and even roles in employment "

Carl Herman
Admissions Director
University of Cape Town



April 2002

August 2002

January 2003

The partnership coordinator visits South Africa to prepare arrangements for a teacher training in-service trip that will include Zee-Bee students as well
Program receives a \$10,000 Grant from Rotary International

Fourteen people make a two-week trek to South Africa. The group spends nine days in Cape Town working at Esangweni; teaching classes and working with the faculty. Included was a donation of ten lap top computers

The Zion Community is blessed with the one-year stay of Sinazo Nombewu and Nozipho Ngwendu through the Rotary exchange system

"My life long dream has always been going to college and I never knew how but always told myself to be optimistic about things like that. When I was told that I was going to receive a scholarship I couldn't believe it. I know I have made my parents proud and most importantly made my dreams come true.

It has been a great year for me, meeting people of different nationalities and making new friends has been a blessing. What keeps me going is knowing that I have a purpose in my life and I have responsibilities. Those things have helped me see that I must take opportunities because they might not come at all or maybe just once in a lifetime!"

Sinazo Nombewu

Exchange Student Program

Within our own community no aspect of our program has had greater impact than our exchange students. In 2003 our local Rotary club hosted two young ladies, Nozipho Ngwendu and Sinazo Nombewu. In 2006 we brought a young man, Mzolisi Kene, to the United States. All three of these young people came from Khayelitsha Township and spent a year at Zion-Benton Township High School and resided in our community hosted by various families. They were placed in classes

within ZBTHS appropriate to their academic skill but also would prepare them for returning to their home education system. Each student excelled while here in the United States. Upon completion of their exchange year they returned to South Africa to finish their secondary educations and then proceeded to the university level.

Moreover, the exchange student provided many benefits to our overall community and raised the awareness of Africa in our

area. The students each presented before an exhaustive list of community organizations and each found their individual place with these that matched their ambitions. Simply stated, the students were wonderful ambassadors for South Africa to the United States.

Nozipho Ngwendu spent her first year after high school attending a night school program in an effort to strengthen her academic skills as she was not pleased



February 2003

February 2003



March 2003

The South African Scholarship Fund is launched as the partnership committee makes the commitment to assisting the university fees for Nozipho and Sinazo back in South Africa

Lindile Maqhubela begins a two-year journalism program at Rosebank College

Sixty Computers are shipped from Zion-Benton to South Africa. The donation is valued at \$80,000

Exchange Student Updates

NOZIPHO NGWENDU spent her first year after high school attending a night school program in an effort to strengthen her academic skills as she was not pleased with her results. She also held a part time job and volunteered in health care facilities in the area. She then enrolled at the Cape University of Technology and graduated in April of 2007. She currently is employed by the South African Defense Forces as a Dental Hygienist.

MZOLISI KENE did not return to his school in Khayelitsha upon finishing his exchange year as the family had been relocated from their squatter camp home to a more permanent location in a different township. We placed him at the Cape Academy of Mathematics, Science and Technology and he actually made the difficult decision to not only do one but to add an extra year of high school. He will begin his grade 12 year in January of 2008.

The format of our annual report does not allow us to fully list all of the individuals and organizations

SINAZO NOMBEWU completed high school and actually earned an Exemption for her studies, one of the highest marks you can obtain in South African education. She enrolled at Rhodes University in Grahamstown and is currently in the third year of a four year Business Communications degree majoring in Management and Information Systems.



who made the exchange of these three students possible. The impact of their time in America is still being felt but more importantly their futures will be forever touched and vastly changed because of their experiences.

“In the heart of Africa I sat in a classroom filled with no hope of ever getting a better life. One magical day, you gave me a chance to achieve and receive a better education. Because of people like you I stand here today on behalf of my country, school and my family as a living and breathing example of the difference that you have made to the partnership and the donations that you have given to the partnership. And I, a simple African girl can say thank you for shining a little light on our continent. I will always thank God for what you have done for my country. Your generosity is overwhelming and your kindness has surely wiped away some of the tears of pain from South Africa. I hope to go back to my country and make a difference to other people. May God bless you and thank you very much! Siyabulela Kakhulu emzantsi Africa ingangi nkosi inisikelele”

Nozipho Ngwendu

June 2003

A computer lab with full access to the World Wide Web is built at Esangweni. Abbott Laboratories in Lake County provided the shipping cost on the computers

August 2003

Childrens books valued at \$6,000 are shipped to South Africa, stocking three previously empty school libraries

October 2003

The partnership hosts Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White for its second partnership celebration

Teacher Training

Our actual first steps in South Africa were not the technology initiative or the exchange student program. We arrived with the intention of improving the abilities of their respective teaching staffs. Our philosophy was that by strengthening the skills, knowledge and resources of South African township teachers that you can add value to the schooling of many students. To date we have worked closely with over 80 educators both specifically in their subject fields and overall in their daily careers. Each trip to South Africa has been focused on the interactions between American and local teachers. These travels have built many life-long friendships between these partners across the ocean.

In subject areas we have provided training in the areas of English language, literature, history, mathematics, business education and ad-

ministration. However, the largest area of our involvement has focused on the integration of technology into all subject classrooms. We have taught multiple lessons in how the computer can be used effectively in the schools of South Africa.

An important aspect of our partnership efforts has been to establish communication with local authorities while engaged in the teacher trips. We have held meetings with local Ro-

tary clubs, the Education Department, school governing bodies, Khayelitsha governing officials and also presented at education conferences. All with the intention of providing projects that meet local needs.



“We are lost for words to thank everybody for such an initiative, we need people like you to motivate us because it is never easy to work with learners whom you know did not have something to eat the last day or morning, have no parents, and are affected and infected with HIV and AIDS, so those whom God blesses like Mzolisi (exchange student 2006) must grab the chance with both hands and try and reach for the stars. Thanks once again to the rest of your team. Love you all!”

**Kholi Dyonashe, Science Teacher
Esangweni School**

April 2004

Partners Across the Ocean staff present several papers on Technology and International Partnerships at the Intel Innovation in Education Conference in Cape Town

August 2004

A Team of Zion-Benton teachers travel to South Africa for in-service work
The second computer lab is completed and the next exchange student is selected

January 2005

Sinazo and Nozipho complete high school and enroll at South African universities

The Township schools in the Cape Town area we have had contact with are: Esangweni Senior Secondary School, Manyano Secondary School, Sosebenza School, Crestway Secondary School, Forest Heights School, Khanyaletu Secondary School, and Tereo Mission School.



“At the risk of sounding terribly cliché, the trip was life changing. How many Americans can say that they stood in Nelson Mandela’s house or on the corner where Hector Peterson was shot? How many Americans can say that they have walked the sandy street of a township squatter camp, searching for the home of a potential exchange student? I don’t think any of us walked away thinking that we were great for what we were doing; I know we walked away thankful for the opportunity to meet so many amazing people.”

Christine Di Grazia



January 2006

Mzolisi Kene our third exchange student arrives in the USA



November 2006

Third Partnership Celebration is held raising funds for the scholarship program. Rob Dintruff of Abbott Labs is the featured speaker.

December 2006

Mzolisi returns to South Africa and enrolls at Cape Academy of Math, Science and Technology

April 2007

Nozipho graduates from the University of Technology, Cape Town

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SUPPORTING AND NETWORKING WITH PATO!

Partners Across the Ocean, NFP is a fully tax exempt corporation under section 501 © (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All donations to the organization are qualified to receive a tax deduction.

Our purpose is to improve the education of students in the townships of South Africa.

How do I schedule a PATO Presentation?

Because talking about our program is the only way to maintain the support of the community, members of our team are available to give a presentation or discussion with your club or organization. Whenever possible we will include a South African on our presentation team. To schedule your Partners Across The Ocean presentation please use the contact information at the left.



Organizing Purposes of Partners Across The Ocean

PARTNERS ACROSS THE OCEAN, NFP was formed to improve the education of students in the impoverished townships of South Africa. The group seeks to collect American resources and assist with the: care and support of donated technology equipment; training of South African teachers to increase their knowledge and

skills per visiting team (and through e-mail); orient, receive and support for secondary exchange students; financial assistance (as funds become available) to former exchange students at South African universities; create a quarterly newsletter or other articles of literature; provide materials for library activities; as

well as to increase public awareness of the issues in education for students in South African townships by sponsoring meetings and workshops for schools and interested community groups.