



## Stevenage – Kadoma Link Association

### SPRING 2006 Newsletter

[www.skla.org.uk](http://www.skla.org.uk)

#### Dates for your diary



**Saturday 22nd April 2006 Friends Group Meeting:** This Friend's Group is to celebrate Zimbabwe Independence Day (18<sup>th</sup> April). There will be Zimbabwean food to try, a Zimbabwean music group, the Cornerstone non-alcoholic cocktail bar and it will provide us all with the chance to celebrate everything good about Zimbabwe. The event will be 3pm to 7.30pm at the Friends Meeting House in Cuttys Lane. You don't need a ticket – just turn up!

**Thursday 27th April 2006 Link Committee Meeting:** Will be held at 7.30pm in the Kadoma Room at Daneshill House, Stevenage.

**Sunday 11th June 2006 Stevenage Day:** Come and visit the Link at this event. We will be selling crochet, preserves and plants as usual. It's a good opportunity to come and say hello and see what the Link have been up to.

#### Education, Education, Education!



When Zimbabwe became independent one of the priorities was to provide education for ALL children up to the age of 13, which was compulsory, and for the most able at Secondary level. A large school building programme was started but the combination of a rising birth-rate and pressure from the World Bank meant that it became necessary to charge fees for Primary and Secondary education. In the 1990s there were problems with drought and food shortages as well as high unemployment and the HIV/AIDS crisis and families found they were unable to pay the school fees which meant their children would be excluded.

Many readers are already aware of the two Link schemes which offer support to boys and girls in Primary School and girls in Secondary School by paying their school fees when their families cannot afford to do so. We are very grateful to all the individuals and schools who help us with fund-raising and at present there are 300 primary and 70 secondary pupils respectively being helped.

Over the last three years, 14 schools in Stevenage have partnered with a school in Kadoma and despite problems with post and the lack of other forms of reliable communication they have managed to exchange stories, poems, artwork, music and even jokes. Several schools have held fundraising events to assist the Link with school fees.

To encourage more Stevenage schools to join in and to support those already partnered, the SKLA applied for a grant from the Department of International Development (DfID).

The Link recently learnt that we have been awarded a grant for 3 years and have invited Martin Masaraure, one-time Chairman of the Kadoma Link Committee and Headteacher of Chemukute Secondary School, to help launch the scheme at a meeting with school representatives in May. It was Martin who first suggested the idea of partnering schools so we are very fortunate that he is currently in the UK and can talk for the schools in Kadoma.

Here are some quotes from children who have benefited from the school fees & from their teachers:

- *Thank you for all you have done for me. I was an orphan but now I feel like my parents are alive again...I am a girl of 13 who is thanking you for your kindness.*
- *Education is very important to our life. God took my parents in unexpected time and no-one could afford to pay fees.*
- *Thank you so much for the assistance you are giving to our children. Had it not been for you they might have been drop-outs by this time.*

### **The Link visit to Kadoma in June 2006**



The Link are planning to send 4 people to Kadoma in June 2006. This decision has been made in light of information regarding the improved safety levels in the area.

As part of the DfID funded work, the group visiting Kadoma will take a video camera to record everyday life. This video will be used as teaching material in Stevenage schools. The group hope to meet as many teachers and pupils as possible while there and liaise between the partners schools.

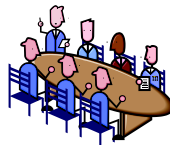
## **Barbara Follett's visit to the Stevenage Kadoma Link**



We are fortunate in our MP who has always been a great support and is in addition a specialist on Southern Africa in the Labour Party in Parliament. She agreed to come to talk and answer questions at a special meeting on the 2nd December.

For a full report on the event, please go to: <http://www.skla.org/events/barbarafollet.html>

## **Committee Who's Who**



In this edition we profile committee member Leslie Ransley.

### **Leslie Ransley – Treasurer Profile**

*Mere words cannot describe how Kadoma has been a family affair for 15 years or more.*

*Then it was that Stevenage Borough Council 'hived off' the running of town twinning links to 'lay' committees. This wise move gave extra impetus to the community based involvement of organisations which became the nationally recognised hall mark of the Link, and featured in a BBC Radio 3 programme.*

*Already, Joyce (my wife) as a founder member, was the very 'hands on' executive secretary with her own inimitable style of arm-bending. Our daughter Hazel, instructed by her supervisor to 'go to Africa and make your own source material' (!) for her University dissertation, 'discovered' Rubatsiro School and Primose came over for work experience in Stevenage's special schools.*

*It was inevitable that I would be enlisted, fondly believing that I was just keeping Leslie Rose's school fees accounts. I soon found myself in a battle regarding the transfer of unspent balances and persuading SBC that such was the nature of*

*Africa, money allocated in a particular financial year was not always spent that year!*

*Visits with varying groups to Zimbabwe followed. My son Nick was to sing at memorial services for his mother in both Stevenage and Kadoma. At other occasions I still cannot recall the unearthly screams of grief over the phone from Kadoma at the news of Joyce's sudden death, without the hairs on the back of my neck standing up.*

*Friends, relatives, old colleagues, Joyce and the Link's contacts within the community are many and various. And, so recently when Nick sang his first engagement at the Gordon Craig Theatre, a quiet voice at my elbow said 'Joyce casts a long shadow at times like this' and I think I know what that voice meant...to me and my family.*

### **In the Next Edition**



The Summer edition of the newsletter is due for publication in June. If you have ideas or requests for other content, please contact the newsletter editor by email.