

NEXUS

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George in 2004 with Al Gerwing at Christina's center for street Kids in Maceio, Brazil

GEORGE BUNZ STEPS DOWN AS PRESIDENT



George and a group in El Salvador in 2011

After 18 years with Rainbow of Hope for Children, we asked George to reminisce in a story for this newsletter. He said that the hardest part about writing this was selecting from hundreds of memories. All of us who have worked and travelled with George during that time thank him immensely for his dedication, hard work and good management over the years. We also thank his wife Louise for all her generous hospitality and great cooking. We are very pleased that George has remained on the board. He submitted the following:

NO ACT OF KINDNESS, NO MATTER HOW SMALL, IS EVER WASTED

The wise Aesop, an ancient Greek fabulist and storyteller, said it right 2500 years ago. My first encounter with large-scale poverty was January 1999 in Brazil's Northeast. Louise, I, and friends were guests of Alphonse Gerwing. Al had come here a decade earlier on a holiday, just retired from teaching. Shocked at the squalor in cities and along roadsides, he decided to walk the dusty trails less travelled, to meet the people living in those plastic tents. He listened to their cries of poverty, homelessness, meagre seasonal employment, culture of machismo and family violence. He empathized with their thirst for dignity and social justice.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

No Act of Kindness	1
COMUS Sustainable Coffee Project	3
Report from Philip Laforge on Kenya.....	4
Report from Simon Ngumbi in Kenya	6
Inside ROHFC.....	7
Horizon School Div. Inducts Al Gerwing ...	8



Overwhelmed at the level of poverty on that first visit almost two decades ago, I questioned what difference could I make? Al reassuringly said that it was his first reaction, but when he walked with the people, visited, and listened to their struggles, they became part of his family and friends. “I come to Brazil to visit my friends. Being present

with them in their struggle for justice is the greatest gift I can give and my time is never wasted.” It was Aesop speaking today.

Ten months later, I accepted the gift to serve as president of the NGO that Al was working with; and 18 years later, as I gratefully welcome our new President, Charles Matt, I am pleased to share a few special memories of Rainbow of Hope’s presence that have made a difference.

January 2001, an earthquake hit El Salvador 100% more devastating than Hurricane Mitch. Rainbow of Hope built temporary housing for 149 families. Los Violetes, a community of 23 homes situated near the edge of a steep slope, ended in rubble two hundred feet below. These families, homeless and abandoned, were refused housing because they did not own their property.

Rainbow of Hope purchased stable land 15 km away, divided it into plots, gave title to the women and the community of Arcoiris was born. We shared the story of *Arcoiris* (Rainbow) before, but as I reflect, I recall one of the most profound testimonies of neglect that touched me to the core:

Our history is 500 years since they discovered us here, and things are pretty much the same. We do not have land or machines, and water is scarce. But we have new friends now who have discovered us, and we rejoice for the help you have given us in our time of need. Most of all we thank you for caring enough to visit us and being with us in solidarity in our struggle.

~ An elder of Violetes-Arcoiris, 2001

YOUTH VISIT TO ARCOIRIS 2004



In 2007, an earthquake hit Peru. It’s epicentre at Chinchá Baja killed hundreds of people and left families homeless and destitute. Joe Gubbels, who had served in Peru 30 years prior, contacted Rainbow of Hope for Children and has been helping the people ever since. His presence and that of his family members and friends has brought hope to thousands.



One of many favelas along the roadsides



shovelling sand, and hauling mortar. They were very well received by their co-workers. We learned that we were very special because the women cooks gave us chicken feet in our soup. It was touching how protective my co-worker Challie was, and to witness his spirituality when he blessed the Complex. As the roof was being cemented, I looked up and there was Challie leaning way over the flashing attaching a bouquet of flowers and a cross.

To our new president, Charlie, and our NEXUS editors, Connie Gerwing and Jan Schmitz, thank you for inviting me to share a few special memories. I look forward to being present with you, our supporters, and our international friends for years to come.

We have reported on the beautiful Adult Occupational Education Complex funded in part by CIDA, and on the building of two schools funded in part by Alberta Government and several Alberta Rotary clubs, the new roofs for homes, and the senior citizens centre. Currently 70 homes are being built for those displaced after the recent floods of April, 2017.

One of my most memorable times in Chinchá Baja was volunteering with two young university students, Philip Hay and Denis O'Dwyer, to help build the Complex in 2010. Those boys sure put out, carrying bricks,



COMUS SUSTAINABLE COFFEE PROJECT FINAL STEPS



Touring the COMUS project in 2017. The Canadian ambassador is center front.



Dignitaries with the Canadian ambassador (center) and George (on her right) with packaged coffee from the project.

The Rainbow of Hope and COMUS (Asociación de Comunidades Unidas de Usulután / Association of United Communities of Usulután in El Salvador) developed a sustainable coffee project which began in 2012 and is finishing in 2017. This project is in one of the poorest regions of El Salvador. It created an ecologically and economically sustainable coffee production and processing business in the area, which then enhanced the food security of the local subsistence farmers in the region. It also helped to improve their capacity to run a larger organization.

In June of 2017, George Bunz and Charlie Matt went to El Salvador to meet the Canadian Ambassador to El Salvador, Maryse Guilbeault, and other local dignitaries. The meeting was held right in the production facility and there was a program and tour of the project. They are growing rust-resistant seedlings. There is a dryer, roaster and packager, which is certified for sales in El Salvador. George spoke on behalf of ROHFC and congratulated the group on the successful completion of their project.

George and Charlie were particularly impressed with the representation from numerous local governments of El Salvador as well as the kind words and support from the Canadian Ambassador.



REPORT FROM KENYA BY PHILIP LAFORGE

In early March of 2017, I had the great opportunity to visit the Rainbow of Hope for Children projects at Kinyambu Primary school, as well as Nzavoni Primary School, in rural Kenya. I had been to Kinyambu Primary in 2010 with my mother, Connie Gerwing, before any of the projects had been started, so this was a great chance to see how things have changed over the past seven years.

KINYAMBU PRIMARY SCHOOL

Since I was last at Kinyambu Primary, ROHFC and the local people have built a library on the school grounds, erected a fence around the perimeter of the school, and purchased new desks, computers, printers, and school supplies.

I toured the school with our friend Simon Ngumbi and some of the teachers. They were happy to show me the new library, which now has a fully walled off back room for storage, and a large locked steel vault for security. Locking things away safely is an important issue here where classrooms and staff rooms are open. I also saw the paintings in the library done by Donna Kurtenbach and her helpers—they are beautiful!

During a tour of the grounds I noticed that there is more vegetation now that the fence is up. The main benefit of the fence seems to be stopping the wildlife from coming into the grounds and grazing on all the shrubs and grass. Some small trees have started growing in areas that were previously barren from overgrazing. I had the pleasure of telling them that the gate funding was in place to complete the fencing project! (The gate has since been built.)

I also was treated to drama presentations prepared by the students and teacher Sylvester Timothy for a drama competition between local schools for the next week. It was very impressive to see! The first one was performed by six pairs of students all acting out the same interaction between a mother and child after the child received a low grade on an exam. All the lines were memorized and recited in (near) perfect unison. The whole performance lasted almost 10 minutes. It was a lot for them to memorize! The moral of the story was that children should be valued for more than their grades at school.

The second performance was a solo done by one young girl who plays both a daughter and her mother. The mother pays more attention to her cell phone than to her daughter, and the daughter becomes frustrated—another well done skit, with a good message. It was a little bit ironic as I sat there recording a video on my cell phone. I found it interesting that they have the same issues in Kenya that we do here in Canada with distraction from cell phones despite the huge differences in incomes. Cellphones are cheap and nearly ubiquitous in Kenya, and coverage is quite good. Apparently to the point where people use them too much!

Next, I sat down for a short meeting with all the teachers to see how things have been going and what needs to be done next. They had some good suggestions for future projects:



Library with murals, shelves, and books



Nzavoni students and parents at a community meeting

Renovations to the current administrative building, or a new one altogether—the current one was built in 1974, is quite small, and has some big cracks in it.	Permanent steel soccer nets for the soccer field and other improvements to the field.
A new or renovated kitchen—the current one is quite small, in poor shape with no ventilation while cooking on open flames.	More classroom space—some classes currently have 60 students in one room with one teacher.

NZAVONI SCHOOL

The next morning was my first visit to Nzavoni School, the newest ROHFC project in the area. Money was recently raised to build two new buildings—one with two classrooms and another with one classroom and administration space. My mother, Connie, had been there a few years earlier, saw the crumbling state of the current classrooms, and decided to see if ROHFC could help.

My job at Nzavoni was to make sure that the parents of the students are willing to provide some security for the materials once they are delivered, and to dig the shallow foundation for the new buildings. There had been some concern that parents would only want to put in the work if they were paid, as there had been some other projects from other organizations that were done that way.

But first, Simon and I had our ceremonious introduction at the school. This was quite a show. Simon and I were marched out to the meeting place by four "honour guard" students in front and behind us. There were chairs set in front of the gathered students and parents, with extra fancy chairs for the visitors along with some other teachers and administrators. There were more dances and poems recited by students before our business meeting.

I thanked the parents for coming and the students for the great dances and poetry. Our worries about parents being hesitant to work without pay proved to be unfounded, as we put it to a vote to see if they would be willing to do the security work and labour on the foundation and it was a unanimous "yes". The parents, teachers and students are all eager and excited to get the project going! Simon and I collected signatures from all the attending parents along with a record of the votes to confirm.

Next I presented the school with a computer and some soccer balls, which they hadn't been expecting. More excitement, especially from the younger students for the soccer balls. In 2010 I had also brought soccer balls for the students at Kinyambu Primary School to use at recess. They seem to wear through them quickly and they are always in high demand. It is a good way to get on their good side!

One of the parents then got up to say some words on behalf of the other parents. She mentioned how other groups had come by over the years and promised to help with the school, but none had followed through. She told me how grateful she and the other parents are that we did what we said we would do. They had been hesitant to believe that anything would come of ROHFC's plan for the school. Lots of love for Connie Gerwing at Nzavoni School!

Following the meeting, I had a walk through the school grounds to see the state of the buildings for myself. They are indeed in quite poor shape, with big cracks in many places and leaky roofs that drip rain through on the students while they work.



Crumbling classrooms at Nzavoni School are dangerous.

KENYA RURAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (KRECD) GROUP

The last part of my duties in Kenya was to have a meeting with the Kenya Rural Education and Community Development (KRECD) group. This group, mostly teachers from the area, advises what the biggest needs are for the students and the schools. I asked them what to focus on next, and they have some great ideas going forward:

- Funding for school uniforms for the poorest students;
- Funding for tuition for orphans—many of them miss school because they cannot pay;
- Chickens raised by the students at school—the eggs can be used for school meals and to make some money at the market. (This may be difficult during months when students aren't at school);
- Computers for other KRECD members.

KRECD is a great resource with an unmatched knowledge of local needs and real solutions that can tackle the issues. I hope that we can implement more of their suggestions and press forward to benefit the students at these schools.

One final note, the standardized test results of students from Kinyambu Primary School over the past 5 years or so, and the average level of performance, has been rising steadily. It is hard to say how much, if any, of this is due to ROHFC projects, but this is certainly a good sign that things are improving. It is great motivation to continue on!

SIMON NGUMBI REPORTS FROM KENYA



Simon Ngumbi at home on his farm

Simon Ngumbi is the chair of the Kinyambu Rural Education and Community Development (KRECD) organization in Kenya. He set up KRECD to manage the projects ROHFC has funded and developed. He is now retired and like many retired teachers, he and the members of his group want to improve their community.

Connie Gerwing met Simon through the Canadian Crossroads International exchange program when she went to Kenya in 1980. Thirty years later, Connie and her son Philip Laforge went back to Kenya and visited Simon and his family who live in Kinyambu.

Simon was in educational administration by that time, but his wife Beth was teaching in Kinyambu Primary School, which is how the project to work in the Kinyambu area began. A \$50 donation by Connie and her friend Mary Anne Hovdebo began things that year—we saw how much could be done with so little.

École Cardinal Leger School in Saskatoon, with former Principal Guy Werbicki (now on the board of ROHFC), became a driving force behind raising money for the library building. Present Principal Wanda Spooner and the parents and children of the school continue to raise funds to support the projects there.

The projects we have built together have inspired other activities in the area and we have seen other projects built with local funds and other agencies in the local schools. Simon writes from Kenya:



Kinyambu School gate

The Kinyambu community, including parents, teachers, and pupils of Kinyambu Primary School, have appreciated ROHFC. To them it has proved to be a real rainbow of hope. Due to poverty the components of the project (fence, library, gate, and furniture) would never be their priority compared to food and other necessities.

They are also grateful to École Cardinal Leger School and its then and current principals for their efforts for the project. It is our hope and wish that sometime they will be able to visit, see the success and impact of the project, see wonderful people and beautiful scenery, magnificent wildlife, sunny and sandy beaches.

The fence has enhanced the security of the school. There is now only one entry point. The school land is safe, and land grabbers are kept at bay. There is no more interference from outsiders and animals. Unauthorised persons cannot access the school compound. Previously one could enter the school compound from all directions.

The pupils are happy and proud for having chairs and lockers while in primary school. Usually primary school children can only start using chairs and lockers when they join secondary schools.

Teachers are free from being squeezed into small desks that are for children. Each now own a chair and a table. One teacher commented that the headteacher's chair and table make his office look like that of the Governor.

Pupils have developed a reading and borrowing culture. Parents are encouraging their children to borrow books for weekend and holiday use. Written and spoken English has improved and, as a result of using the library, performance in national examinations is expected to improve.



Student's new desks.



The new Library



Teacher's tables and chairs

INSIDE RAINBOW OF HOPE FOR CHILDREN

OUR NEW TREASURER: CHERRY DUMALAGAN



Cherry immigrated from the Philippines to Canada in 2005 with her husband and 3 children. She has a degree in accounting and worked in the Philippines and in Canada, but had to take many classes again in

order to qualify here. She is currently working and living in Surrey, BC and loves singing, playing guitar and doing tax returns.

Cherry's middle daughter went to Australia with Youth with a Mission for 6 months and this was the key for Cherry to think seriously about volunteering her skills with some international organization. She found ROHFC on the website of the Chartered Professional Accountants and decided to try us out. Cherry is enjoying the new experiences with Rainbow of Hope. Her first 6 months had many income tax return issues and the yearly audit so she is hoping the next period will be easier. George Bunz, former president, has been very helpful in her adjustment and learning.

A NEW BOARD MEMBER: MARGARET BENNETT



After two years as a missionary in France, Margaret, born and raised in Toronto, moved to Lethbridge, where she met her husband, Richard. They have been married 43 years, have 5 children and 14 grandchildren. She taught school for many years. She and Richard recently returned from 18 months in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where they served as missionaries for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. On a trip to Bali, Indonesia, they saw John Fawcett, founder of the Fawcett Foundation, restoring the sight of the poor through cataract surgery in mobile units. In raising funds for his work in Canada, they approached George Bunz and ROHFC. George convinced the board and the project for the sight-restoring surgeries was implemented in 2014. ROHFC's careful management of the donations to provide the maximum assistance to those in need makes Margaret excited to be able to work with such dedicated, caring and knowledgeable board members.

RAINBOW OF HOPE FOR CHILDREN SOCIETY Statement of Revenues and Expenditures Year Ended March 31, 2017

	2017	2016 Revised
REVENUE		
Donations	\$ 216,567	\$ 245,868
Federal government grants	194,240	167,014
Provincial government grants	11,270	-
	422,077	412,882
EXPENSES		
El Salvador	321,141	149,856
Peru	60,202	68,322
Project monitoring	29,721	-
Brazil	28,176	50,323
Project administration (Note 9)	25,159	13,045
Public participation	10,988	12,336
Kenya	5,000	11,915
Ghana	3,000	3,840
Tanzania	2,000	12,234
Bali	1,355	11,000
Nicaragua	-	26,135
Unrestricted	-	23,314
Philippines	-	550
Guatemala	-	417
	486,742	383,287
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES FROM OPERATIONS	(64,665)	29,595
OTHER INCOME		
Interest income	(4,884)	(6,381)
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	\$ (59,781)	\$ 35,976

Statement of Changes in Net Assets Year Ended March 31, 2017

	Projects fund	Unrestricted fund	2017	2016
NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$ 310,575	\$ -	\$ 310,575	\$ 4,583
Prior period adjustment (Note 11)	-	-	-	270,016
As restated	310,575	-	310,575	274,599
Deficiency of revenue over expenses	(59,781)	-	(59,781)	35,976
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	\$ 250,794	\$ -	\$ 250,794	\$ 310,575

Note:

The amounts donated back by Rainbow of Hope directors and monitoring teams were:

Administration:	\$ 7,319.16	Net administration is	\$17,839.52
Monitoring:	\$13,372.13	Net monitoring is	\$16,348.47
Public Engagement	\$7,321.48	Net public engagement	\$3,666.02

A copy of the full audited statement is available from Treasurer Cherry Dumalagan at 604-308-7783 or dumalagancherry@gmail.com

OFFICERS

President: Charles Matt,
Saskatoon, SK
V-President: Peter Van Winssen,
Wainwright, AB
Secretary: Clara Qualizza,
Wildwood, AB
Treasurer: Cherry Dumalagan,
Surrey, BC

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

George Bunz, Wainwright, AB
Joe Gubbels, Edmonton, AB
Patrick Hessel, Spruce Grove, AB
Margaret Bennett, Vermillion, AB
Connie Gerwing, Prince Albert, SK
Gilles Verret, Edmonton, AB
Guy Werbecki, Saskatoon, SK
Theresa Zyp, Spruce Grove, AB

HORIZON SCHOOL DIVISION INDUCTS AL GERWING

Almost 10 years after his passing, Alphonse Gerwing was honored by being inducted into the Horizon School Division Hall of Fame in Humboldt, SK. The Division established the Wall of Fame Award to honour graduates of their schools who have outstanding achievement in their chosen field of work, area of interest, or, who have had a significant impact on society. There were five inductees for 2017.

The ceremony took place on September 1st at the Humboldt Uniplex and was part of the school Opening Day Celebrations with around 1000 people in attendance. Al's nephew, Steve Buttinger, accepted a plaque on his behalf and reflected on how Al's early years in the school division shaped his future life choices and directions.



RAINBOW OF HOPE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF:



Global Affairs
Canada

Affaires mondiales
Canada

Government of Alberta
CIP - International Development

Thank you all for your support

Thank you to all our donors, several Rotary Clubs and Knights of Columbus, Edmonton Community Foundation, and the Al Gerwing Charitable Foundation. Special thanks to Miss Sharon Romanow and her leadership students at Blessed Sacrament School in Wainwright for helping prepare the NEXUS mail out. Also thanks to Peter Van Winssen Professional Corp. for covering the cost of mailing the newsletter.

PROGRAM OF RAINBOW OF HOPE

1. Reducing avoidable blindness, Indonesia
2. MMTRP-AL (Rural women workers and fisherwomen in Alagoas), Brazil
3. School of family agriculture, Bahia, Brazil
4. PREDA protecting children, Philippines
5. El Sauce School organic agriculture, El Salvador
6. COMUS sustainable coffee cooperative, El Salvador
7. High school & university scholarships, El Salvador
8. Disaster reconstruction & education, Chinchá Baja, Peru
9. PAMBE Ghana education, nutrition and health
10. Kinyambu Primary School, Kenya
11. Nzavoni Primary School, Kenya
12. Bilingual Bicultural College, Cunen, Guatemala
13. Ussongo Primary School water project, Tanzania
14. Ussongo Preschool
15. Disaster relief fund
16. Undesignated: where most needed



*This Christmas
the gift you give
can help
change the world*

We thank you for offering a gift to one of these projects and are pleased to acknowledge your donation with an income tax deductible receipt. Kindly send your donation to:

RAINBOW OF HOPE
WAINWRIGHT, AB T9W 1S7
PO BOX 2883

Registered Charity No: 889160172-RR0001
www.rainbowofhopeforchildren.ca

Donations of securities is a significant tax advantage; to donate shares please contact our Treasurer at dumalagancherry@gmail.com or 604-308-7783.

NEXUS: Produced and edited by Connie Gerwing and Jan Schmitz in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and Rainbow of Hope's Head Office in Wainwright, Alberta, Canada. The expressed views of the authors are not necessarily the views of the NGO.