

The Magic Penny

www.themagicpenny.org



Fall 2013 Newsletter

Letter from Lucy

Not that long ago, the Gladys Caulker LeFevre School was an elusive dream, but now an April working visit is an annual event. This time, on the third anniversary of the school's inauguration, Gary Schulze, Judy Figi and I travelled together to view the fruits of your great generosity.

The entire Bompehtoke community is invested in the school: just after we arrived, they held a PTA meeting to outline each parent's responsibilities and clarify expectations for student performance. The parents thanked TMP for providing ten scholarships for the children who qualified on



the national exams; these successful Magic Penny primary school graduates now attend a junior secondary school in somewhat distant towns since there is no middle school in the area. Scholarships are \$150 per year for each student. Of course the next great endeavor for TMP, at the behest of the village, is to build a middle school! Much of

the time we were in Bompehtoke was spent on attending to the myriad of issues – some small, some greater – that go along with the daily operation of a school program. For me, it is so phenomenal that we have arrived at this point. Travelling back to Sierra Leone to visit The Gladys Caulker LeFevre School is a

dream come true. The Magic Penny offers heartfelt thanks to Mrs. Annie Bangura, the TMP Sierra Leone director, to the late Mrs. Mamie Caulker, former treasurer of TMP Sierra Leone, to the teachers at The Magic Penny school and to the parents and community of Bompehtoke. Most importantly, I could not be witnessing such progress without the great generosity of all of you who have so graciously supported The Magic Penny and my hopes for the future of the children of rural Sierra Leone.

As always,
with enormous gratitude,
Lucy Sumner, President

Score!

Not all of the time in Bompehtoke was taken up with work. The soccer goal posts and nets that were donated last year have been installed on the playing field and we watched an exciting match between The Magic Penny School and a nearby rival. I am very happy to report that even though it was a nail biter from beginning to end, the Gladys Caulker LeFevre School prevailed, winning by a score of 3 to 2! Celebrations and trophies followed for both the winning and losing teams. TMP is now seeking donations for soccer kits, jerseys and balls to keep our team in tiptop shape.



Paving

Because Bompehtoke is seaside, sand is a constant factor. The Magic Penny has long had a paving project on its to-do list and we can now happily report that the job will begin during the dry season in the upcoming fall/winter. This project has been financed by a \$1210.00 donation from the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Wisconsin (through the auspices of

Judy Figi) and an additional \$1250.00 grant from the Friends of Sierra Leone. Paving is extremely expensive, primarily because it requires transporting heavy equipment and supplies from Freetown to Bompehtoke along impossible roads, while paying an exorbitant amount for gasoline.



The sands beneath our feet



The bridge has washed out again

Home Grown Teacher

The Magic Penny will reach another milestone at the end of this year: the student whom we sponsored at Freetown Teachers' Training College will be graduating next year. Francis Bome has done his student teaching at the Gladys Caulker LeFevre Primary School and he plans to return to Bompehtoke as a full fledged teacher beginning with the 2014 -2015 school year.



When Sharing Isn't the Best Way

TMP board member and former Sierra Leone Peace Corps volunteer Judy Figi has been an invaluable friend to TMP. On this year's trip she brought school supplies with her and, thanks to donations from Judy's friends, with a little infusion from Gary, Judy and Lucy, textbooks were purchased in all the major subject areas for grades 3 to 5. While once the children shared three to a book, some actually now have their own. The teachers are elated and believe that with sufficient books will come a greater motivation for learning. Additional textbooks will be purchased for the entire school in September 2013. Pens for the white boards and small slates and chalk have been donated by two of our board members and classroom chalkboards will be replaced with more durable plywood.



Thanks

Former Sierra Leone Peace Corps volunteer RoseAnn Rotandaro sent TMP a check for \$1000.00. Oh what can be done with such a bonanza: TMP can purchase the chicken wire to keep the goats out of the garden, and the new seedlings needed to expand the garden. Every project has a learning curve and TMP is beginning to see just how steeply climate affects this one. The lengthy rainy season and relentless humidity have taken their toll on the school building. The door locks have rusted out so TMP will purchase marine hasps and locks that are better suited to the climatic conditions and can be

replaced as needed at a lower cost. The heavy rains also mean that everything will need to be painted during the dry season. Even the new soccer nets have fallen victim to the punishing rains: the weather shredded them, so Lucy arranged for a fisherman to make new ones using macramé thread. Even though the the original equipment has been damaged, it is always rewarding to be able to ask a local person to step in and do the work. And thanks to RoseAnn Rotandaro TMP has a bonus fund to keep up with these constant nagging expenses!



Gary Chief Pieh



On May 4, 2013, Gary Schulze, the vice president of The Magic Penny, was invested as Honorary Paramount Chief of Kagboro Chiefdom. The honor was bestowed upon him in recognition of his extraordinary service and contributions to Sierra Leone and Kagboro since 1962. Chief Doris Lenga Ghabiyor Caulker II is the first of the Sherbro people to offer such a tribute to a foreigner. Gary, who received the title Chief Pieh, said, "This is the most important moment of my life. I am deeply grateful to the Peace Corps for having given me the opportunity to come to Sierra Leone." Chief Pieh then received gifts including a beautifully carved Chief's walking cane, a carved wooden map of Sierra Leone with both his name and Chief Doris's highlighting the location of Shenge, a sack containing soil from Kagboro Chiefdom and the traditional gifts for a new Paramount Chief – a bag of rice, a gallon can of palm oil and a live goat.

Rockin' Good Time

It was a long winter, but on March 1, 2013, the spirited students of the Harborfields High School Global Justice Club warmed it up for a packed audience. Under the direction of faculty adviser Michelle DaSilva, this globally concerned group of students undertook their third annual benefit concert, this time to fundraise for The Magic Penny. The evening was great fun, and the results: the students raised \$4000.00, with a matching gift of \$1,500.00 from Long Island Cablevision – a grand prize for The Magic Penny!



Garden Party

About thirty people braved the July heat wave to join TMP in the annual garden party on Saturday, July 20 at the home of Laura and Russ Sapienza. The hosts were lavishly generous in their hospitality, while everyone's favorite ensemble -

Neil Ralph on keyboard, Vernon McAuley on tenor sax and Kate Levine, vocals -

accompanied the attendees as they snacked on shrimp, sushi, pinwheels and assorted desserts. Raffles, and the silent auctioning off of both a golf outing donated by the Sapienzas, and Mets tickets, brought in an additional \$1000.00 to the earlier total of \$1581.00. Lucy shared pictures and a presentation about her recent trip to visit The Magic Penny School in Bompehtoke. Despite the temperature, a lovely time was had by all. We missed the many who could not join us, but who donated to the event nonetheless. And we wish to take this opportunity to thank the wonderful people who so kindly and often volunteer their time to make TMP events so special!



Lucy addresses the guests



PLEASE JOIN US

Enclosed is my tax deductible contribution:

\$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 Other

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Please place a gift of \$_____ on my

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Credit or Debit Card Number: _____

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Lucy Sumner, President