



Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home

A UK charity supporting Matthew Rusike Children's Home in Zimbabwe

Newsletter, December 2024

Report from the home

On 21 November, the Executive Committee of the Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home held a catch-up meeting over Zoom with the home's Director, Rev Linny Mutendzwa. Also joining the call from Harare were the Chair of the home's Board of Trustees and the Secretary of the Zimbabwean Methodist Conference. This was a chance to get an up-to-date picture of recent developments at the home along with the challenges it faces and its plans for the future.

These were the main items of news.

The need remains as great as ever as Zimbabwe's dire economy, compounded by drought, results in children being abandoned or neglected. As more people migrate to neighbouring countries in search of work, families disintegrate and even more children are left vulnerable.

At the same time, financial pressures have forced the home to cut back on the number of children it can support and it's now carrying out the difficult task of reducing capacity from 100 children to 60. Those aged 18 and above are



Dedicated staff providing love and security

being discharged, others are being transferred to foster parents – or to relatives where these can be traced – and those with behavioural challenges are moving to government-run homes.

Care is being taken to ensure that no child ends up in a worse situation than before: older children being discharged are being helped with accommodation and training, for example. Given that the main financial burden is salaries (these often have to be paid several months in arrears), the home will sadly lose two members of staff by Christmas.

Linny and his colleagues emphasise that these are temporary measures and will be reversed as and when finances improve.

In better news, a new 75-metre borehole drilled in November has helped to relieve the home's water crisis, though funds are still needed for a pump and tanks along with solar panels to run the system and to fuel the kitchens. (Mains electricity remains as unreliable as ever and tends to be on only during the night.)

Water is more of a problem at the outreach centre at Donga where work continues on the existing borehole to extract more of the small amount of water available.

Asked what his funding priorities would be in the coming months, Linny listed water supply, staff salaries, children's education, expanding the provision of solar power and improving security – in that order.*

As always, the Committee is deeply impressed by the dedication of the home's staff and the love and care devoted to the children in extremely difficult conditions. Our help, and that of our supporters, remains as crucial as ever.

****If you'd like to support a specific project at the home as a church, a group or an individual, please contact our Chair or Secretary to discuss options.***

UK fundraising

£10,000 from music and mountain-climbing



Solihull Methodist Church chose Matthew Rusike Children's Home for its fundraising efforts during 2023/24. Among its many events was a Zimbabwean musical

evening in July featuring not just African music but Cantonese and English as well. Songs were sung in Shona and Cantonese, accompanied on guitar, ukulele, piano and *guzheng* (see above). An African group had everyone dancing in the aisles.

In August, eight walkers got up very early to drive to North Wales and climb Mount Snowdon. It took them over four hours to reach the summit where they stopped for a photo-shoot against the magnificent views before starting another two-hour walk back down the mountain. Eight tired and aching fundraisers arrived back in Solihull later that evening.

Thanks to these and other events during the year, the church raised a magnificent £10,467 for the home. Thank you, Solihull Methodists!



The Grinch to the rescue



When Debbie Berrill and her husband Terry celebrated their Silver Wedding this year, they asked for donations to the home in lieu of presents. Debbie also made two Christmas

waistcoats featuring The Grinch and Father Christmas which she raffled to raise further funds. The draw is happening as we publish this newsletter with ticket sales so far amounting to more than £450. With Silver Wedding donations added, Debbie and Terry's total comes to around £1,100, not counting Gift Aid.

Debbie's particular concern is the home's retired staff, many of whom are still owed salary and who no longer have the benefit of meals and accommodation at the home. Her intention is that money raised can be used to help them.



Huge thanks to all those who've raised funds for the home this year. We'd love to hear of other fundraising efforts. Get in touch with Debbie (details on page 4) and tell us what you've been up to. Thanks, too, to those who've continued to support us through regular giving and one-off donations.

Christmas cards

If you still have Christmas cards to send, why not save the cost of cards and postage with one of our electronic cards? We have several



designs you can choose from. You can email up to 100 cards to family and friends, customise each one with a personal message and make a donation to Matthew Rusike Children's Home at the same time. Make your choice at:

<https://www.dontsendmeacard.com/ecards/charities/friends-of-matthew-rusike-childrens-home/christmas>

Matthew Rusike children celebrate school graduation

29 November was an important day for the children at Matthew Rusike's Early Childhood Centre, the nursery for the home's under-6s and also for fee-paying children from outside the home. Along with children from Grade 1, the year above, the pre-schoolers celebrated their graduation by displaying their talents in poetry, drama, music and dance. The event attracted a large number of the fee-paying parents and proved to be a memorable day.

The pictures show some of the buildings and the children enjoying the graduation day out.



Thank-you, Carol



We mentioned in our last issue that Carol Banham had stepped down as Chair of the Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home after more than 20 years in the role.

Carol has been involved with the charity ever since its formation and throughout that time has provided stability and focus for its work. Her belief in education for all and her dedication to caring for others have made her a determined advocate for disadvantaged children in Zimbabwe.

Carol's time as Chair has covered a turbulent period for the home, not least because of Zimbabwe's volatile politics and economic struggles. Supported by her husband Don, she has visited the home on several occasions, spoken frequently about its work and organised numerous fundraising events – all in addition to running the annual Christmas card sale which has raised thousands of pounds over the years.

Thanks to her regular contact with the home, Carol's newsletters have given us a clear picture of what life is like for the children and those who care for them and have helped to determine where the charity should focus its development projects.

We'll miss Carol's leadership, but thankfully we'll continue to benefit from her wisdom and support as a trustee. On behalf of both the home and the charity – thank-you, Carol.

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