

BLACKIE ON
A MISSION



MARCH / APRIL

WELCOME TO BLACKIE ON A MISSION FOR 2018

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Fruits of Hope Academy

As part of my role of training teachers, last newsletter I told you about mentoring the Nursery Teachers. We meet every Tuesday and discover methodologies of Teaching preschoolers. We have researched the benefits of outdoor play and the Teachers particularly liked the concept of the outdoors being like a Dr to help the children gain strength and prevent illness.

One of the Teachers asked if we could research the benefits of play based learning and learning centres - sure thing - I was working up to that anyway! So we went straight into learning centres and I have to say the Teachers are thriving on the theory behind learning centres. They can relate the knowledge to individual children in their classes and are asking some wonderful, relevant questions.

After researching the learning centres, the Teachers were given a task of researching in depth some more benefits of such methodologies and then were to give an interactive and thought provoking presentation. Above right is Teacher Odette sharing with us her thoughts on the benefits of a literacy based learning centre.



Resources

It was interesting to me that she places a game of word bingo out on the table - the box is left closed and none of the pieces had yet been 'unperforated', assuming this is a resource that has been donated by the western world friends and not explained how to use it. Rwandans are so very polite, I can imagine that the Teachers would say yes they know and then keep the precious resources on the shelf. I sat down with this game and asked if others would like to play it with me - none of the Teachers knew how to play it. None of them had ever seen the game before and none of them said they knew how to play the game. It brings to light for me the value of giving resources without clear explanation and demonstration on how to use them. I think our next term will be back to basics and teach the teachers how to simply 'play'.

The Kings College

While, at times it has felt like a long time, the College construction is now in it's final stages - yay! The plastering has been completed, with the electricity and Internet being installed. It just needs to be painted and have tiles laid.

At the moment Fred has been involved in creating a data base of all preschools in the Gisozi sector. He is in the process of planning meetings with those interested in attending the College and particularly those planning on sending their staff to the College to hear what their needs are and how they would see the College. While our initial plan was to first take students who were currently working (in service Teachers), there has been some people enquiring about would we consider taking student that were not yet employed. Of course this can cause grief, due to making sure payments are made to meet the College needs, so we will see where we go with this.

In the close future we plan to host a College Open Day for the preschool Directors in the sector to come and visit and see our curriculum and what we plan on training the teachers when the College opens. As the wheels are slowly turning, so the excitement of seeing a ten year dream come to fruition - thanks for partnering on this journey with us!



EASTER EGGS FOR BREAKFAST



WHO DOESN'T WEAR THEIR SUNGLASSES SHOPPING?



ANZAC DAY CEREMONY



GROWING UP!



Some of life's realities....

Here are a few little stories to let you in on a glimpse of what life is like in our world....

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You may or may not have heard that Rwanda is having a very - I mean VERY wet rainy season. Last Tuesday night the rain was heavy and hard for the entire night. I woke, wondering about those who were in mud housing - like Flora's father and her grandmother and siblings out in the village were experiencing. As the day went on, we heard that 18 people had lost their lives in the one night due to houses collapsing. Sadly many more had lost their lives throughout this rainy season and it becomes news that doesn't make the news.

When I say a very wet rainy season, it has pretty much rained most days this year, yesterday morning after another heavy night of rain, as I drove through the wood markets I saw a lady bent over - backside in the air - this is not that uncommon as they are usually in this position sweeping or hoeing in a field. I was taken aback, however, as I continued to look out the car window and this sweet lady - who was probably just a girl, was scraping thick red mud up from the gutter of the road with a small piece of square cardboard. Yes - a piece of cardboard and I wondered for how many days had she been cleaning the streets of Gisozi with a piece of cardboard - you see the heavy rains, while they don't affect me directly, they do affect so many others - some lose their houses when they collapse or just a wall of their house, others gain employment as they scrape the mud from the gutters of the community.

Grace was a sweet young lady whom I had the privilege of working with when I worked at the Cafe with International Teams. I trained her in some of our training sessions and she always had a smile on her face with a willing and servant heart. Grace left Rwanda to be married in Uganda in January 2017. About three weeks ago Grace gave birth to her first child. Unfortunately, like so many, the medical system failed Grace who died after giving birth to her first baby - another baby growing up without a Mumma.

The other day I asked my Driver Charlie how he was - he has little english and I have less Kinyarwanda but we seem to manage. He told me he was very tired because his newborn baby was crying all night. His wife has struggled with what I assume as post natal depression and last year I helped them seek some counselling. She seemed to be doing ok and this day last week, poor old Charles burst into tears like a baby and said Umugore (wife) no good - very bad. Oh how I feel for him and wish I could do something to help, but we all know mental health, mixed with the trauma of a possible genocide survivor is a hard thing to navigate - even with language let alone not knowing the language.

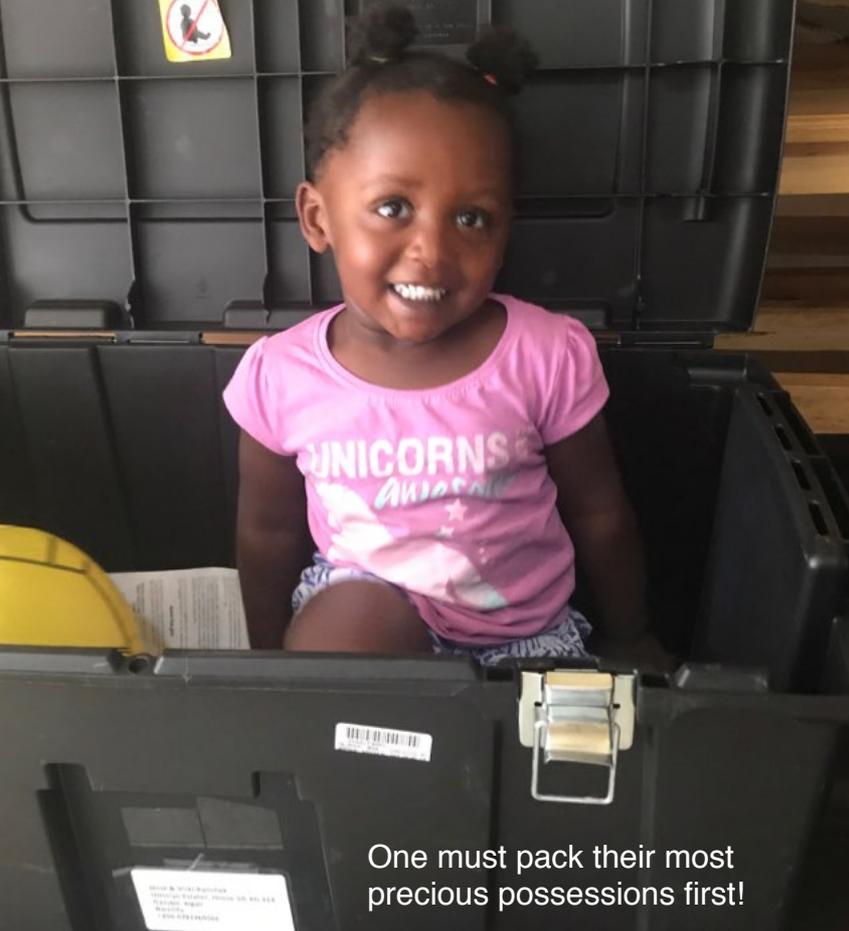
A few weeks ago, I had made plans for Flora to visit her father. The night before I received a message saying that it may not be a good idea for Flora to see her father in his current state, as he had been drinking and his face was all messed up. While I feel for him, my heart breaks for this little girl and I trust and pray that she will grow up knowing her story and being thankful for the life she has been given and the life she was exempt from. Rwanda's Government also announced that they would remove the housing estate where her father was living - one of the poorest areas of Rwanda and so he has also moved house recently.

We found a house...

Our front page shows you that we have found a new house!!! Yay - and - we are so very excited - no more open stinky drain, outdoor kitchen, noisy neighbours and no backyard. We truly feel God's favour on finding this house because it was less than half the price of most houses I looked at, it has been gutted and redone, so basically it is completely brand new - new kitchen which is inside the house - enormous ensuite, three bedrooms and large living room / dining area. What I love the most is a very high back wall with no neighbours kids hanging over the fence calling out Mzungu. There is a long flat driveway, which will be perfect for a sandpit and bike riding and the house is two doors down from the Minister of Defence so the area has high security. Oh - and I can't believe I forgot to mention that it is on a tarred road - no more red dirt in the dry season and red mud in the rainy season. Not only a tarred road, but a tarred road with footpaths - morning walks - here we come - actually they may become evening walks to help tire a little lady out. There is a small yard which they have planted some trees and plants - so it may not be the 'playground' I was hoping for but a friend has grand plans for giving us a bunny rabbit cage with a mother rabbit and week old bunnies - we will see - if you come to visit us and I cook rabbit stew - you will know where they came from! Across the road is another little two year old girl who Flora already knows as I attend Bible Study with her Mum and she helped us find the house.

As is standard practise over here I needed to pay six months in advance plus one month security. Do you know how much that is - lets just say I needed to take a shopping bag with me to carry the wads of cash. I also needed to visit an atm machine 18 times! Why - because while I can access money from an ATM - the daily limit is so low I had to make multiple visits. And did you know that not all ATM's work every day - sometimes they work - sometimes they don't - sometimes they dispense 5,000rwf notes and sometimes - usually on the second last day that you need to make up the balance - they only dispense 1000rwf notes. And then just to really spin your driver out - you don't have enough money in the account so you come back to the car, log onto Commonwealth bank - transfer cash from Australia to Rwanda, from your phone then go and get cash out of the wall. Charles thought it was very funny and so out of his world - he still uses an analogue nokia phone bless him.

Flora and I would both sincerely like to thank each one of you who made this house a reality for us, like I said I truly feel God's favour in this house - now I feel like I can give this little girl a home and she can invite friends over for play dates and have birthday parties in the back yard without a whole community looking in and wondering what we are doing. And for me, having a nice place to come home to will certainly be good for my own mental health as I continue to live cross culturally.



One must pack their most precious possessions first!

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Did you know...

Language learning can be so very confusing and funny at times. On Monday when I was starting to pack boxes and move things from one house to another, I asked my driver Charles to 'mfasha' - which means 'help'. Well that was my intention anyway - I apparently said 'Umfasha' - which actually means - 'Can I be your wife!'

He said, 'Yes Yes - ok' as we laughed over carrying some more boxes to the car. I told him - no Charles you already have one wife, you must only have one! We still laugh about it.

The day I went to collect the keys to the new house, all the windows were open and had been for a few days. Some would say, 'only in Rwanda' - they wouldn't close due to too many coats of paints and they had got 'stuck'! We somehow sorted them though. And what good timing - I have visitors coming next week - so their bags are nicely filled with curtains - who knew hey!

We are heading into a busy season of hosting, hosting not only personal visitors but also friends from a variety of different teams, who over the years have become personal friends as we share in this life in Rwanda. It always energises me - and the little extrovert I live with to invite visitors into our daily lives and the work we are doing here in Rwanda. We recently had a visitor last week, and Miss Flora, never did call her by name, she just called her 'friend' - and I love that, I love that she embraces anyone into our home and calls them 'friend' so quickly.

On April 25th, I went to my third Anzac ceremony here in Rwanda and I wasn't disappointed. They always do a great job to honour our Anzacs - we will remember them! There was a nice scene of the Australian flag and the New Zealand flag with several wreathes that had been laid by various dignitaries. The wind picked up and the two flags blew, so a few of us gathered around to get that iconic pic - only to burst out laughing as we noticed the poor old Australian flag had been hanging upside down all night - truly was the land down under I suppose you'd say!

This year there is a high turn over of expat friends leaving Rwanda, I have already had to say good bye to some very close friends last weekend. The upside is, the garage sales and finding all sorts of things you lived without for a long time and now realise you can't live without! We have some more very dear friends to farewell tomorrow and again later in the month of May - the transient lifestyle of expat living.

And the rains have just started up again - guess I have missed my call to walk home in the dry - it is wet and muddy out there after so much rain.

Thank you again for reading to the end of another newsletter, please remember we enjoy hearing your news too, so send us a message and let us know what is new for you.

Many blessings to you all,
Michele and Flora xo

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