



# FARMERS HELPING FARMERS NEWSLETTER

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Jeff Wichtel*

Hello to Farmers Helping Farmers (FHF) partners and members. On the occasion of our 30-year anniversary, I would like to send warm greetings on behalf of Vice President Guy Cudmore, Past President John Vanleeuwen, and the tremendous group of enthusiasts that make up the Board and populate the various Committees that make this organization the success that it is.

Perhaps I should introduce myself – I am Jeff Wichtel, the FHF President. I am a professor at the Atlantic Veterinary College and have been involved in FHF a relatively short few years, but have enjoyed every minute of it. Farmers Helping Farmers is by far the most effective organization I have ever been involved in, and demonstrates success and impact far out of proportion to its size. It is an organization that has, with very little, done much good in East Africa.

But it has done more than provide material help to those less advantaged in East Africa – FHF members live the concept of “global partnership.” This model, if it were to be adopted more widely, would do much to address poverty, education, gender equality, health and food security . . . much more, I believe, than any number of international symposia and summits. I am fortunate to have served on one of the teams in Kenya and have seen this first hand.

This coming winter and spring, 20 persons from PEI will travel to Kenya to be involved with a range of projects: dairy, crops, education, and health. Fourteen of these will be university students, representatives of the future generation that will help make our organization viable for many years to come. We are now doing more actual field research on economic, nutritional and health outcomes of our programs, which I am very pleased about! This will assist us in justifying and expanding our programs.

It has taken three decades of effort to bring FHF to the point it is now, and I think we are now seeing the fruits of this labour not only in the benefits that have accrued to our partners in Africa, but also in the personal benefits we, the members, and the many people we have touched (through for instance the school twinning project) have gained from being able to exercise our innate desire to help and instruct.

Not to mention that this organization is nowadays held up as an example of how small groups of committed people can make a real difference in the world – a potent antidote to the cynics that contend we are powerless to make a difference.

I would like to thank all the members and contributors over the years that have helped FHF meet its goals: the many generous individuals, families, small businesses, and schools; charitable partners such as Rotary and the Souris Village Feast; the Stephen Lewis Foundation, and of course the Canadian International Development Agency.

I think we all look forward to this next phase of the organization as it expands its reach from its principal role in helping our partners attain agricultural self-sufficiency into assisting in improving education and health outcomes -- there is a lot of work to be done.

All the best in 2010.



*Godwin, the twinning teacher at Kiirua Boys' Secondary proudly showing the progress of the school farm*

## CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

*Mary Nicholson*

In 1979, Charlottetown hosted an International Family Farm Consultation and as a result of this event the organization now known as Farmers Helping Farmers was formed. On November 19, 2009, more than 70 people attended a wonderful celebration of the first 30 years of the organization at the Arts Guild, Charlottetown.

The evening started with a reception in the Gallery at the Guild where current and former members mingled and exchanged stories, watched the 1984 documentary by Brian Pollard about the organization, and looked through scrapbooks from Patsy Dingwell and current educational materials produced by Farmers Helping Farmers and used in Island schools.

The formal part of the evening was kicked off by Mistress of Ceremonies, Patsy Dingwell. Patsy gave beautiful comments about the importance of the organization's work and the volunteers who have made the work happen.

Teresa Mellish, founding member and currently Treasurer for FHF, gave a slide show and presentation highlighting the major milestones, turning points and projects of the first 30 years. Her presentation gave an excellent overview of the significant work accomplished to date by FHF and showed the deep personal relationships which have been formed between PEI and Kenyan farmers and how these are at the heart of the work.

Two Board members who have volunteered their expertise in Kenya also gave presentations on the current work of the organization. Dr. John VanLeeuwen, Past-President of FHF and a Professor of Veterinary Medicine at the Atlantic Veterinary College, talked about the work that he and volunteer vet students have done in Kenya and included slides showing what the farms are like and illustrating some of the challenges farmers in Kenya face. He also spoke movingly about the profound personal gifts he has received as result of his service.

Angus Mellish, a seed specialist with Vessey's, spoke about the work he did last January to educate farmers in Kenya on new farming 'best practices' aimed at helping them to make the best use of their land and the most of their difficult growing conditions. His presentation was also accompanied by a slide show which really helped to illustrate what can be achieved if the 'best practices' are put in place. Angus has been volunteering with FHF since he was a teenager and he also spoke about the way his volunteering with the organization has given back to him.

Interspersed throughout the evening were acoustic performances by singer and guitarist Scott Parsons. These performances, along with the balloons and flags decorating the room, added a real festive flair to the evening.

The evening ended back in the Gallery with anniversary cake, sandwiches, hot apple cider and lots more great conversation, collegiality and hopeful speculation about what the next 30 years will bring!

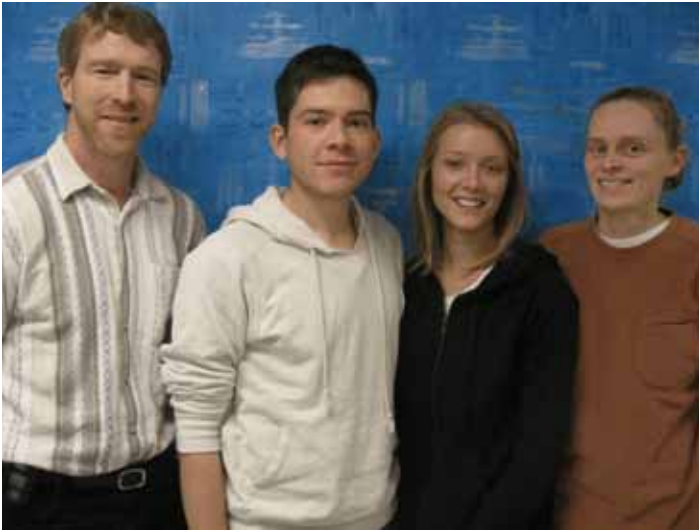
## STUDENT NURSES - CLINICAL ROTATION



*l-r: Kaela MacKinnon, Lisa MacQuillan, Katie Arsenault and James Sullivan*

Four, 4<sup>th</sup>-year student nurses from the University of Prince Edward Island will be completing a clinical rotation at the St. Theresa Mission Hospital in Kiirua, Kenya, January 29 - February 26, 2010. Dean Dr. Kim Critchley will be accompanying the team. The hospital is an 80-bed facility with surgical and maternity wards, an outpatient clinic and an outreach clinic for HIV patients. The student nurses will have the opportunity to work in each of hospital wards. The clinical rotation will provide them with an opportunity to learn more about Kenyan health issues.

The student nurses will also be assisting with health assessments for Carolyn Dohoo, a Dalhousie University student. Ms Dohoo will spend two weeks in the Kiirua area evaluating the health benefits for families using biogas generators rather than open wood burning fireplaces. The open fireplaces produce excessive amounts of smoke in homes causing increased respiratory diseases among women and children. Ms Dohoo will return to Kenya in summer 2010 to complete her research.



*l-r: Dr. John VanLeeuwen, Gerald Dykstra, Shauna Richards and Aleta Schmah*

## **VETS STUDENTS TO PROVIDE TRAINING**

Gerald Dykstra, Shauna Richards, and Aleta Schmah are three senior veterinary students who will be accompanying Dr. John VanLeeuwen from the Atlantic Veterinary College to Kenya from January 22 to February 13. They will spend a couple of days working with the Wakulima Dairy Ltd, 1 1/2 weeks with the Othaya Dairy Co-op, and one week with the Thubuku Dairy Group, and the Muchui Group. The first two groups of dairy farmers are located west of Mt. Kenya near Nyeri, while the last three groups are east of Mt. Kenya, near Meru.

The student vets will provide hands-on veterinary care to sick animals, and enhance health management for better productivity through animal- and farm-based assessments and recommendations. They will also be giving seminars on improved health management.

## **NUTRITION RESEARCH**

Colleen Walton is enrolled in a graduate program in Health Management at the Atlantic Veterinary College. Her research for the graduate program is focused on investigating the diet quality of Wakulima dairy farm women and their children. This summer, Colleen with her research team of Lisa Wolff, Samwel Mbugua and Regina Gitau interviewed 88 Wakulima families from four membership duration groups and 23 non members; asking about their home, benefits from the dairy group, income, nutrition knowledge, food security and diet. Half the participants then enjoyed a nutrition seminar, complete with sampling home fortified (pumpkin) chapattis and 'sukuma' made using drought tolerant indigenous greens.

Colleen will reexamine nutrition knowledge and diet quality when she returns to Kenya later this month to determine the impact of the nutrition education. She will also be organizing nutrition seminars for those women not having attended in August.

Colleen is studying under the supervision of Dr. John and is grateful to the Wakulima dairy, Farmers Helping Farmers, the World Veterinary Congress, Veterinarians without Borders, and the Canadian Home Economics Foundation for their cooperation and support in this project.

## **MEET THE AGRICULTURE TEAM**



*l-r: Teresa Mellish, Ken Mellish, Susan MacKinnon, Colleen Walton and Dr. Winston Johnston*

In late January Ken Mellish will begin work with three dairy groups on developing their facilities and business plans. His work will also involve teaching dairy farmers in the area, with emphasis on fodder preservation

Susan MacKinnon and Winston Johnson will be working on crop production with the Muchui and Ruuju groups. They will be developing composting systems to replace purchased fertilizer and upgrade soils. They will also be evaluating and making adjustments on the current VSF project on Crop Diversification and Drought Tolerant Crops.

Colleen Walton will, in addition to her research work, be working with the dairy groups on improving milk quality.

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

*Carolyn Francis*

From November 13 - 25, 2009 as a member of the FHF Education Committee, I traveled to Kenya to complete work on the School Twinning Program. Tasks to be carried out were:

- reviewing the progress made in schools which received funds from their PEI twinned school/ partner;
- meeting with each school's head teacher and others (such as the School Management Committee Chairperson, other teachers, and directors assigned to a school) to obtain a written agreement with each school that would clarify the process of accountability for use of donated funds;
- obtaining updated information and having each school identify their current school needs;
- taking photos so that each PEI school would have new photos to share with their students and community;
- delivering letters to each currently twinned school; and
- identifying, visiting, and gathering information on additional schools that might have the potential to be twinned.

In total, I visited 16 schools!



*Students at Gathikumundu Primary learning directly about the digestive system of the rabbit. After they finished the body was taken to be cooked for lunch.*

I had the opportunity to be present at a meeting with CIDA staff who were visiting all Farmers Helping Farmers projects in Kenya. It was such a pleasure to see the pride of the local people as they described the progress they had made over recent years. Many expressions of gratitude were given to the support of FHF.

I visited the Wakulima Dairy and its projects in the Murkurwe-ini area, the Muchui Women's Group and Ruuju. Since my first visit in 2004 there has been much progress which has enabled many families to support and educate their children.

On PEI we are constantly aware of weather and spend a lot of time talking about it.... I find it is the same in Kenya except that they are praying for enough rain to grow their food crops. This was the first time that I saw green fields and crops everywhere I traveled, even in the semi-arid areas. What a beautiful site to see! Water, often collected in water tanks provided by PEI students, helps to ensure that more children have enough to eat. This also means that they have more success in school.



*Students from Ndunyu Secondary lowering the flag at the last day of school before the Christmas holidays.*

The next newsletter will be written in early April. If you have an article or photograph that you wish to submit, please forward the material to Sandra at [rarearthpotato@eastlink.ca](mailto:rarearthpotato@eastlink.ca) or contact her at 629-1759.

## STUDENT TEACHERS TO TRAVEL IN MARCH



*l-r: Evan Killorn, Hannah Coulson, Stan Chiasson, Cynthia Lahey and Lindsay Gorman. Missing Dave MacPhee*

March is quickly approaching and six education students are getting ready for an experience of a lifetime in Kenya.

FHF provides a compulsory orientation program for those going to Kenya in addition to the planning at UPEI, under the direction of John Rollins.

The students Travelling to Kenya - Hannah Coulson, Cynthia Lahey, Lindsay Gorman, Dave MacPhee, Stanley Chaisson, and Evan Killorn - as well as 16 other students in the International Specialization, are busy raising funds to help with the costs of their teaching placements in many countries around the world.

For the first year, three students will be based in the Meru area in Kiirua Boys' Secondary and Kinyenjere Primary. There will be great excitement in these schools as soon as they are aware they have been selected for a UPEI pre-service teacher.

The other three will be based in the Murkurwe-ini area - in Ithanji Primary (for the second year) and in Matuto Primary for the very first time. There is great desire from every school to have a PEI teacher!

These six students anxiously await news of which school will be their teaching location. The next FHF orientation session will be held on January 16 and will include an information session for parents or partners

## WEDDING GIFTS BUILDS A CLASSROOM

Rob Deacon and Rebecca Hooley are teachers. In 2008 Rob was scheduled to travel with the pre-service teachers to Kenya, unfortunately the trip had to be cancelled due to political unrest in the country.

When Rob and Rebecca were married in August 2009, they asked guests wishing to give them a gift to make a donation to Farmers Helping Farmers. Over \$5000 in donations were received. Rebecca and Rob decided that the money should be used to build a classroom at the Kinyinjere Primary School.



*New classroom at Kinyinjere Primary School*

Farmers Helping Farmers presented Rebecca with a certificate recognizing the new building during a reception held in August at the University of Prince Edward Island for Shaad Olingo.



*l-r: Rebecca Hooley, Teresa Mellish and Shaad Olingo*

## SEEKING NOMINATIONS FOR AWARDS

A reminder that April 30, 2010 is the nomination application deadline for three Farmers Helping Farmers awards. The awards recognize the contributions of our volunteers, supporters and members, and will be presented during the FHF annual meeting in September.

- “Friend of Farmers Helping Farmers Award” recognizes individuals and businesses who are not members of Farmers Helping Farmers, but who have made a lasting and extending contribution to the association. Contributions may be in the form of financial or in-kind.

**The 2009 winners were Bev and Shirlee Simpson – Vesey’s Seeds Ltd.**

- “Farmers Helping Farmers Youth Award” recognizes individuals (25 years and younger) and youth groups (classrooms, 4-H, AY, Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, etc.) who have made outstanding contributions to public awareness about Farmers Helping Farmers and its work in Kenya. The successful nominee will be recognized for their extraordinary spirit that makes their contribution an inspiration to others, and exemplifies citizenship and volunteerism.

**Stonepark Farmers Helping Farmers Club was the 2009 recipient.**

- “Honourary Life Membership” recognizes members who have made an outstanding and substantial contribution to the organization and its purpose. They have inspired and encouraged others to be engaged, and have served as an example within the organization.

**In 2009 Patsy Dingwell was recognized for her leadership in the area of education public awareness, and Shaad Olingo was recognized for his commitment in ensuring that our small-scale, practical agricultural projects are successfully implemented in Kenya.**

Nomination forms are available by phoning 629-1759 or at [farmershelpingfarmers.ca](http://farmershelpingfarmers.ca) under the heading “Awards.”

## KRISTIN ROE PRESENTED WITH AWARD

During the annual meeting of Farmers Helping Farmers, a special award was presented to Kristin Roe, Halifax in recognition of her outstanding contribution to public awareness and funding raising for African women. In

July 2008, Ms Roe completed a 16 hour double swim of the Northumberland Strait. The swim raised more than \$80,000. The funds are being used to improve the lives of African women through project work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation and FHF. Ms. Roe’s choice of FHF as one of her sponsoring organization raised the national profile of our organization.

## WAY TO GO, CAITLIN!



*l-r: Caitlin with her two brothers, Casey (10) and Brennan (14). She credits her brothers for being huge supporters of her project*

Caitlin McCarthy, Florenceville NB is a young lady with a goal of raising money for a developing country. When her uncle, Rick Brennan, who was vice-principal at Gulf Shore Consolidated School, told her about the money raised by his students last year to purchase water tanks, Caitlin decided on a goal. She plans to try to raise \$5,000 for a classroom at the Kinyinjere Primary School.



On Dec 20, Caitlin organized a Christmas play at her church in Florenceville. She solicited donations at the door- and raised \$1,430.

She has other plans to raise money including a 5 and a 10K run during the summer.