

Citation for Eileen Greene

Eileen is currently a nursing teacher and Adjunct Professor at the University of Victoria in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. In 2004 she accompanied an international team, including an AIDS research specialist, to Namibia, Africa where she observed first-hand the AIDS crisis and the challenges the country was facing in its wake.

In 2007, Eileen led her first group of Camosun College Nursing students from Victoria, BC, to Namibia for an intercultural experience and the opportunity to work in a 850-bed inner city hospital. Working at the Katutura Hospital in Windhoek, Namibia, both inspired and discouraged her. Eileen met Maria there, a 16-year old girl afflicted by AIDS, and her mother Monica. Together they struggled to care for Maria who tragically died from a disease, which may have been prevented by education.

In Maria's memory, Eileen and Monica started The Home of Good Hope, a 'soup kitchen' targeting children in the impoverished black community in the township of Katutura. The people there live in shantytown homes with few amenities such as running water, electricity, and toilets. At its inception in 2007, the soup kitchen fed approximately 40 children; today, 535 children depend on the Home of Good Hope to fulfill much of their basic requirements for survival.

Eileen remains the project manager, working back in Victoria, BC, to raise funds and attract donors. She has traveled to Namibia every year for six weeks to provide Canadian nursing students with a field school opportunity and at the same time she actively lobbies the Namibian government and local leaders for increased support for the project. The Home of Good Hope is a not-for-profit organization registered both in Victoria and Namibia with a Board of Directors accountable to their respective governments. Strong links have been established with European partners who also provide valuable and welcome support. Under Eileen's direction, the Home of Good Hope recently became registered with the government of Namibia as a HIV/AIDS organization. This was an important achievement as priority is given to these organizations.

The Home of Good Hope carries out its work in a tiny structure on borrowed land where the children basically squat on the roadside. It is difficult for Monica to cook sufficient food in her tiny poorly equipped kitchen and then transport it by local taxi to the site where the children are fed, hence the current goal is to purchase land and then build a permanent structure with a large kitchen, two large classrooms and living quarters for Monica.

The soup kitchen currently provides educational opportunities as well as nutritious meals. It is the hope that educating the children will help to lift this community out of poverty. For students coming to Namibia from abroad for a field school experience, the education is aimed at promoting knowledge of and sensitivity to foreign cultures and their political, social and national environments. In so doing, students continue to develop their health assessment and evaluation skills while at the same time improving the mental and physical well-being of the children. As the nursing students play with, feed and guide the children, they practise their understanding of the World Health Organization's Millennium Development Goals. They learn to work with very limited resources, language barriers and poor patient prognoses as they develop a higher level of critical analysis and questioning, and a deeper understanding of the meaning of 'human rights'.

Eileen is self-effacing and humble about her involvement; for her, it is all about the children. She is awaiting permission for the charitable organization in Canada to buy land in Katutura to build a new Home of Good Hope. Her current dream is eventually to make the Home of Good Hope self-sustaining with much of the ongoing volunteer work being done by individuals who have benefitted from its presence.