

DUMELA



Newsletter from Botswana Sweden Friendship Association No 3/2010

Dear BOTSFA members!

Summertime is leisure, and reading time! And many other activities' time! I hope that you have had a good and enjoyable vacation, and that you feel refreshed and ready to jump into your working shoes again! Says she, who has retired!

Dumela Newsletter 3/2010 focuses on two persons: Neo Chitombo, a Motswana who runs Bright Faces Daycare Centre, and Professor Alexander McCall Smith, the famous author of the series of Mma Ramotswe and her detective agency.

The interview with Neo Chitombo, done by *Dumela* earlier this year, shows that the need of support for Neo's Bright Faces Daycare Centre is obvious. The Board of BOTSFA has on its agenda to give a helping financial hand on the condition that all administrative paperwork that Neo needs to do, have been put into place. Welcome to read the article on page 2-3. To know more about Neo Chitombo, »Miss Stigma Free«, visit Dumela Magazine on www.botsfa.nu.

The International Book Fair on 23-26 September this year in Gothenburg has »Africa in Focus«.

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Professor Alexander McCall Smith will participate and also give a lecture about being an author. What makes him write? Not only about Mma Ramotswe but also books about life, for example in Edinburgh. As you will see in this *Dumela*, his books have sold over 20 million copies! And translated into over 40 languages.

»Mma Ramotswe's Cookbook« will be launched at the Fair in Swedish translation. After the Fair, McCall Smith will continue his travels to visit Stockholm together with his wife. During this short visit a dinner will be held in his honor at »Sällskapet« on Sunday 26 September 2010. Expressions of interest for BOTSFA members to participate in this dinner should be sent to info@botsfa.nu, latest August 31, 2010.

Botswana Sweden Friendship Association will, during the coming autumn, continue to work as usual. We do hope, and invite, all

Members to contribute to *Dumela Newsletter* or *Dumela Magazine* (on the website) by sending to info@botsfa.nu your news, your stories, your memories or your experiences related to your life in Botswana and/or Sweden. And, you still have a couple of days to send your photos for the Photo Competition!

Until next time, take good care!

Best regards,
Ulla Odqvist
BOTSFA's Chairperson



A small reminder of **Tuesday August 31st** until which date members can express their interest • in attending the dinner at »Sällskapet« in honour of Professor Alexander McCall Smith, and • participating in the Photo Competition. For details, please visit www.botsfa.nu.



TEXT AND PHOTOS
Kerstin Jackson Main and
Julia Majaha-Jartby



»I have forty-three kids,
says Neo Chitombo,
caressing one or two
that were clinging on her
legs for attention.

Bright Faces Daycare Centre

SINCE JULY 2007, Neo has devoted her time to developing Bright Faces Daycare Centre in Kumakwane, a village about 20 km from Gaborone.

–I had worked for a project, Ringing the Bell, which was being run under BONEPWA, a non-governmental initiative. The project provided support to the development of daycare teaching. It became my inspiration to spending time with children and I decided to start Bright Faces when the project ended. I started with 6 kids, using the savings I had from the work with BONEPWA.

Today, Bright Faces, a two-roomed daycare in Kumakwane, takes care of 43 kids, looked after by 4 teachers. The two rooms look cramped but Neo is quick to say,

–Luckily, the weather is good most of the year. It is a challenge when it rains and during winter when the mornings are ice cold. At the time of going to press, Dumela learnt that the daycare had moved to a slightly bigger house at a monthly rent of P1500 per month.

Dumela visited Bright Faces on a warm autumn day and the kids were cheerfully jumping around getting ready for lunch being prepared by two

of the teachers.

–The teachers are more than babysitters, they are guiding forces in the children's lives, Neo says.

–With the challenges of HIV/AIDS, we're seeing more children losing out on the traditional Botswana extended family life and Bright Faces fills the hole created by the loss of parents and relatives. It is also basically a relief to single working mothers, who have the challenges of caring for their children and providing for their material comforts.

Responding to the question over the profile of children, Neo says that, while most of the children have parents or someone able to pay the P300 monthly fee, there are those who are not able to raise the fee.

–I would wish to assist every child in need to get a brighter future, but maintaining the daycare is a challenge. The P300 fee covers teachers' salaries; meals; maintenance of the property; and education material, Neo says.

She goes on to say that some of the kids live a long distance from the daycare. To solve the problem, the daycare has engaged Lipson Morolong, Neo's partner, to transport those kids in his minibus for a small fee. The

minibus picks up the kids and delivers them to their homes at the end of the day. The financial records are maintained by Kagiso Tito, a teacher with business management. Neo adds that, in response to health care needs, one of the teachers, Karabo, has a nursing qualification.

Dumela also visited Kumakwane Primary School where most of the Bright Faces' graduates continue their early childhood education. The teachers were all praises for the pupils from Bright Faces. They were deemed to be well prepared for school; to have very neat writing; and to be exceptionally outgoing.

Dumela was treated to the openness of the Bright Faces culture. In an impromptu session, the kids introduced themselves – proudly announcing, I want to be a doctor; teacher; nurse; pilot; etc. And there was creative cooking from artistic cardboard designs of a stove and other kitchen utensils. Some of the kids were watching Popeye on video, accompanied by laughter that filled the Kumakwane skies.

–I believe in openness, Neo says. There are times when I have to deal with issues of abuse by parents or rela-



– Filling the Child Care Breach

tives. Not always easy, but my commitment is in protecting the children – always! It's their future that matters.

On what challenges the daycare has, Neo is quick to list out the following:

The daycare has been registered with the Registrar of Companies, but is not yet licensed. Work toward the licensing is advanced – awaiting inspection from the licensing authorities;

The daycare is currently being run through her personal account; a situation she plans to change as soon as the daycare is licensed (the bank needs a minimum of P 5 000 deposit to open the account for the daycare);

The daycare building is very small. There is a need to expand the building.

Neo does not have the qualifications to apply herself fully as a daycare promoter; has enrolled for a course to upgrade her skills.

There are kids whose parents (mainly single mothers) cannot afford to pay the fee to be at the daycare. Neo strongly feels that the kids should be part of Bright Faces.

In terms of priorities, Neo places the extension of the premises first. She is optimistic about getting the license, perhaps and understandably, with conditions attached. She would

wish to serve the daycare better by getting relevant qualifications. To that, she has registered for a one year course starting in December 2010 at the Universal College of Law, affiliated to the Botswana Training Authority (BOTA) and the Tertiary Education Council (TEC). Last but not least is getting relevant material for teaching at Bright Faces and assisting kids whose parents cannot afford to pay the monthly fee. All said and done, it would be a great relief to have the



daycare licensed, Neo has continued to assert.

– It's a challenge, but I love seeing bright smiles on the small faces and the relief that is written on the parents' faces, Neo says to *Dumela* in her plea for help.

– When I am with the kids, my whole world is around me.

Bright Faces Daycare, Kumakwane, Botswana
Established: July 2007
Distance from Gaborone: 20 kilometres and visibly located along the Gaborone–Kanye road
Number of kids: 43
Number of teachers: 4
Fee: BWP 300/month (appr. SEK 300)
Depends entirely on the fees; does not receive any subsidy from government, local authority, or private donations



Professor Alexander McCall Smith visits Sweden in September

TEXT AND PHOTOS
Mats Ögren Wanger and Cecilia Wanger
TRANSLATION Julia Majaha-Järtby

THE FAMOUS SCOTTISH AUTHOR of the No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency series, Professor Alexander McCall Smith and his wife, Elizabeth, will for the first time ever visit the International Book Fair in Gothenburg in September 2010. McCall Smith's Swedish fans look forward to the visit and to meeting him at a dinner hosted by the Embassy of Botswana, *BOTSFA* and Mowana-Media at Sällskapet on September 26 in Stockholm.

Professor McCall Smith has written 11 books under the No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency series, the latest of which is *The Double Comfort Safari Club*. In this volume, Mma Ramotswe leaves her familiar environment in the capital of Botswana, Gaborone, to go to the Okavango Delta on a detective assignment. McCall Smith says that he has long had plans for Mma Ramotswe to go to the Okavango, one of the few places tourists to Botswana visit. I wanted to write about a part of Botswana most visitors would relate to, says McCall Smith, who travels to the country regularly to get some inspiration for his books.

Added to the series is »Mma Ramotswe's Cookbook: Nourishment for the traditionally built«, authored by Stuart Brown and with a foreword by the McCall Smith. He says in the foreword,

–When Stuart showed me a draft of the book I was astonished at the extent to which food is mentioned in the original books. I do not re-

member endowing these books with quite so many culinary references, but there is no doubt that I did, says Mma Ramotswe's creator. –That is not because Mma Ramotswe is a glutton – it is just that she often thinks about things when cooking or eating...

Alexander McCall Smith is the author of more than sixty books, of which the No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency series is known worldwide. The main character is Mma Ramotswe who owns Botswana's ladies' detective agency business, where she works with her assistant, Mma Makutsi. The series has sold over 20 million copies, has been adapted to TV and film and translated into over 40 languages. McCall Smith also writes about his home country, Scotland, among which are a series of books under 44 Scotland Street and the Sunday Philosophy Club, featuring Isabel Dalhousie, an amateur sleuth and a philosopher who uses her training to solve unusual mysteries. He has also written a children's book series, *Akimbo*.

A writer and professor of Medical law, McCall Smith lives in Edinburgh, Scotland, grew up in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and has also worked and lived in Botswana, which has provided the setting for his No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency series. He says about his writing,

–I have discovered that if I keep my eyes and ears open, I can find out about many things that have happened and learn and understand issues from my characters' perspective and

in their environment. This helps me to construct my stories. It is the country, itself, and its people that inspire my writing.

The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency series received the annual award for the best translation of crime detective books from the *Svenska Deckarakademin* in 2004 and is a global bestseller.

McCall Smith and his wife love classical music. They both belong to an amateur fun music band, *The Really Terrible Orchestra*, which claims part of their time when they are not globe-trotting to be part of writers' events.

–It is of great help to have common interests in a marriage. We have the pleasure of playing together, even if the result is not always the best!

The couple looks forward to the visit to Sweden, among other things to be part of a concert featuring students at *Lilla Akademien* music school and *Sedibeng Choral Society* from Botswana, and dinner prepared by Botswana TV famous chef, *Joseph Seeletso*, at *Sällskapet* in Stockholm.



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