

# HANDS ON DECK

ISSUE TWELVE



Hands at Work  
AFRICA



*“We’ll get to this community even if we have to walk” – Dan Waspe*

## SWAZILAND EXPANSION

Sibusiso Mamba, RST  
Dan Waspe, International Volunteer  
(UK), RST Leader

The Regional Support Team Leaders were apprehensive about expanding into Swaziland as they had little past experience. But they knew the need was urgent. They had to trust God, and let go of their insecurities. A native of Swaziland, Sibusiso tells his experience of their mission to reach the most vulnerable children:

We heard of a poor community isolated along the Mozambique border. Every single local person we asked said, “You cannot go there”. They said there was no transport, and the community was not considered legitimate by the government. Even other organisations in the area said, “You cannot. It’s not safe, it’s not easy”. Dan said, “We’ll get to this community even if we have to walk”. We had to ask soldiers for a letter to be allowed to drive near the border. We met a man walking and he

said, “You won’t make it, the soldiers won’t give you a letter”. I thought for sure Dan would turn back, but no. We got to a soldier who said, “You won’t make it, but you can try”. After so many challenges, and dangerous roads, we eventually made it.

We met people living in such desperation, there was so much hurting. No schools, no clinics. One water well with cow feces in the water. I thought I knew Swaziland, but I didn’t have the true picture. I have seen HIV/AIDS, but in every house there were grandchildren with gogos because all the gogo’s own children have passed away from HIV/AIDS. Every house was made of mud and falling apart. I read in the newspaper about children who were going missing. I asked people I met in the community if it was true, and they said yes. I asked them, what can we do? They said they didn’t know. I challenged them to come together in their churches to care for these kids. I explained home visits to them, and our hope that if the children knew someone who loved them was coming to visit,

they maybe wouldn’t run away.

The RST will continue pursuing expansion in Swaziland. This trip personified our 2014 WatchWord, Revelation 3:8, “I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name” (NIV). God continues to open the doors for us to serve the most vulnerable, even where others say there is not a way. And no matter our insecurities, no matter how little our strength is, He is being made strong through our faith.

## + CONTRIBUTORS

in this issue of Hands on Deck

Marc Damour  
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## HOW GOD WORKS: TO CANADA AND BACK

Daytona Swarbrick,  
International Volunteer (CA),  
Communications Team

Kristi Swarbrick,  
International Volunteer (CA), RST

After serving in Africa for 14 months, Daytona and Kristi returned to Canada. In seven weeks, they travelled 4,500 kilometres from Toronto to Vancouver Island, visiting family and friends, playing in the snow, and advocating on behalf of the most vulnerable children. They spoke about the vision of Hands at Work at many events, church services, and fundraisers. They were supported by Hands Canada family across the country. The encouragement and love they received has allowed them to return to Africa, committed to serving until at least September 2015.

After weeks of sharing stories of the people in Africa who impacted her, Kristi shared the story of someone who has impacted her life in Canada. At 96, her grandmother, gogo Ruth still speaks her mind and corrects grammar! Their special bond began when Kristi was young and gogo Ruth helped to raise her, supporting Kristi and her family. "I get my love of games from her," Kristi said, "She is so generous, so strong. It was hard to say goodbye".

The Swarbricks returned to Africa with a new understanding of what God has taught them. "It was really special to share in Canada what I've learned at Hands about the value of relationships", Kristi said. "I can be very task oriented. I don't always know what to say. But when it was quiet with gogo Ruth, I was okay to just sit together. I want to continue to put relationships first and be held accountable to this." They learned about God's faithfulness too. Their condo has been for sale for almost two years. "We were struggling," Kristi said. "Originally we made returning conditional on selling our home. But then Daytona said we can't do that – that is not how God works." Together they stepped out in faith, committing to Hands at Work without any financial assurance. "Anything worth having is tough. We have never looked back. Please pray for us not to lose hope." God has recently affirmed their leap of faith, and honoured the many prayers for Kristi and Daytona. Currently, they are awaiting the finalisation of a conditional offer on their condo! "When people ask us where our home is, we say Africa".

**UPDATE:** On February 5th, 2014 the Swarbrick's condo SOLD! Thank you for all of your prayers.

## PROJECT SUPPORT TEAM

Marc Damour, International  
Volunteer (CA), Project  
Support Leader

Over the last several years, the Project Support Team has begun to take shape. It is difficult to find a metaphor to adequately describe what members of the team do. Hands at Work has often used the picture of scaffolding. That is, building capacity across Hands, and particularly building capacity in our Service Centres to plan and prioritise, and also in our project and financial management. Plumbing is another metaphor we can use, as the team hopes to facilitate communication between Service Centres, Regional Support Teams, the Hub, and our International Offices. This communication is helping us to move from identifying needs, to prioritising those needs, to creating proposals, ensuring the proper approvals, and when funds are available making sure they reach the ground when they are needed and in such a way that there is transparency, accountability, and, ultimately, there is reporting back of what was done. Maybe the best way to look at Project Support is to think of it as threads interwoven into the tapestry that is Hands at Work. Like everyone who is volunteering with Hands, we desire to learn how to serve one another, to help others be successful in their roles, and to be open to others helping us to be good in our roles. As part of this tapestry, most of those on the Project Support Team wear many different hats and sit on several different teams.

There are three key priorities for 2014: To invest in our African volunteers to take on a larger role within the team; to invest more in our International Offices and develop Project Support roles there; and, with the blessing of having a number of longer term volunteers on the team, to continue to mature and develop as a team.



## IN ABUNDANCE

Tyler and Alicia (and Hayden!)  
Ralph, International Volunteers  
(CA), Regional Support Team

Tyler and Alicia have been long term volunteers since 2010. In June 2013, they returned to Canada for seven months to give birth to their first child. Tyler said, "Reconnecting with family and friends was really special. It can be tough to go home and talk about all the things in Africa that have impacted us. We prayed so much about our return and God really broke through and gave us opportunities to speak from our hearts".

The Ralphs went home questioning, "Where will we live? Where will we work?" God provided in abundance as Tyler went back to work as an x-ray technician right away. He and Alicia received full medical coverage, and found a perfect place to live, a huge blessing with a baby on the way! They were amazed by the support of their friends, family, and church community. "They supported us emotionally and financially", Alicia said. "We didn't have to worry about anything – God took care of it all".

On October 19, 2013, Hayden Tatenda Ralph was born. Alicia's mother said Hayden was sent to be "a softener of hard hearts". As this little gift from God brought their family closer together, Alicia and Tyler learned to deepen their patience and faith. "God answered every single prayer and provided more than we needed," Alicia said. Having their own child has confirmed Tyler and Alicia's calling to serve the most vulnerable children in Africa. "Hayden has two parents who love him and so many people who care about him. We are meant to be here and serve those children who do not."



Hands at Work family at the Hub, WatchWord launch, January 10, 2014

*"Over the past weeks, we have shared the WatchWord together, and held meetings and workshops to plan for 2014. Witnessing you all together I was reminded, we are not running training courses. We are experiencing life together! You are digging deeply into each other's lives and you must continue to invest in one another."* - George Snyman