

QHOLAQHOE MOUNTAIN CONNECTIONS



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November 2020

News from Qholaqhoe, Lesotho by Lynn Minderman

Dear Donors and Sponsors,

At the time of our last work trip in March, the COVID 19 health pandemic had fully entered Lesotho. Although board members can no longer travel, we are relying on and appreciative of the help from our partners and friends in Qholaqhoe, which in spite of the extreme setbacks and difficulties, is working well.

When the virus entered, Lesotho was unable to handle the health crisis as hospitals, clinics, medical doctors and nurses are limited in number and equipment. Virus cases have been centered in the capital, Maseru; there have been no cases in Qholaqhoe or in the province of Butha-Buthe. No roads, electricity or running water in extremely rural Qholaqhoe does provide social distancing.

It is the never ending reverberations of this health pandemic that has and is affecting the lives of people in Qholaqhoe. South Africa, surrounding Lesotho, has the highest virus rates in sub-Saharan Africa. As SA is the leading employer of Basotho people, many fathers and mothers in Qholaqhoe have lost their jobs and have been forced to return home.

The World Food Program estimates that 80,000 Basotho are on the verge of starving. One of our QHS scholarship students, Moleihi, wrote in a letter to her sponsor: *"Some students survive by eating at school, so as schools are closed it means they have nothing to eat."*

Qholaqhoe High School Scholarship Program

School closed in early March and remained closed for six months. Classes have now resumed for two grades, Form C and E, in order to prepare students for national exams. Principals and the Teachers Union have requested that schools reopen for all students on November 4.

Many students will not return to school. Boys have left school to herd cattle in the higher mountains. School shutdowns leave girls at risk of violence and abuse, teen pregnancy and early marriage. Ten girls in-form C and E are pregnant and did not return to school. We know many girls in other grades are pregnant or married as well. For children who never come back to school, the consequences are massive. They are at greater risk of lifelong poverty, having lower life expectancy and poorer health outcomes.

Students say because their parent(s) lost their jobs, there is no money for tuition. Principal Mme Mosaase reports the government has directed school principals to send the names of parents who have lost their jobs due to COVID, and it is anticipated that the government will provide funding for school fees.

The traditional school calendar (January – November) has changed. Students will attend school six days a week; the six week Christmas break is cancelled; national exams will be administered in April 2021. One hundred and eighty days school attendance will remain a requirement.

QMC donors have made it possible for a Friday meal for every QHS student. Because lunch has been provided on Fridays for every QMC student over the past 4 years more children attend school all five days of the week. Previously, a number of students left school on Thursday, since there was no Friday meal.

Water has always been difficult for villagers in Qholaqhoe and although government promised long ago to have a clean water supply available in every village, these community “taps” depend on rain. QHS has no water, the tank is empty, water needed for hand washing, is not available. The school truck drives to Qholaqhoe Primary School, a short drive down the mountain and is able to get water twice a week. Boys from Form C and E classes help get water from the tap in small plastic jugs and fill the water container in the back of the school truck. This water is used in the “tippy taps” which are required in order for schools to meet the COVID requirements.



QMC College Scholarship Program



Kananelo and Mapula arrive at NUL



All 8 students gather before heading to university.

Our eight college students are safely in rooms on campus at NUL, are receiving three meals a day, and on-line and some in-class instruction has begun. Although campus is closed due to COVID, our students are given dorm rooms because they come from extremely rural areas with no electricity for on-line classes.



It is a difficult time around the world and the severity of our world-wide health pandemic is often incomprehensible. Our work in Qholaqhoe helping children receive an education has been our goal for over twelve years, and we are determined that even now when our energy and financial help is needed for our own families and neighborhoods, we have decided to continue.

We are asking for your help to make it possible to continue our two education scholarship programs for the 2021 school year. All fees for both programs are paid in full for the 2020 school year.

We currently have 63 high school students who are being sponsored at a cost of \$15,000. Please let us know if you wish to continue your sponsorship of \$250 next year; funds will now be due by March 1. If you would like a new student or to become a sponsor, we welcome your help .

Our eight University of Lesotho students have their tuition, housing, food, books and monthly small allowance paid for the 2020 school year; \$5,000/each. We are committed to seeing each of these students through to graduation if they continue to pass their courses. We will need to raise \$40,000 each year if we continue to maintain the maximum of eight students every year. You can follow the progress of our college students through our website, qmconnect.org and we will continue to give you updates in our newsletters. Please help these students with your donation to our college fund.

How to Donate

Our 2021 donation form is attached below. Simply complete and return with your check.

or

Use the DONATE button on our website: www.qmconnect.org. It is easy, it is fast.

Thank you for your help and trust. You can find contact information for all of our QMC board members on our website. Please contact us with any questions or for more information.



QHS students receive food from Emergency Food Fund



Form E students in class.



2021 Donation Form

Qholaqhoe High School Programs \$ _____

- QHS Scholarship Fund: new and returning sponsors
\$250 provides one year's tuition and testing fees per student.
- QHS Emergency Food Fund
\$75 provides supplementary food for a child for 10 months.

Qholaqhoe Community College Scholarship Program \$ _____

- Yearly tuition at National University of Lesotho \$4,000
- Misc. personal expenses for one student per year \$100
- Textbooks for one semester \$150
- Residence fees for one semester \$350
- Food for one semester \$350
- Laptop, per student \$400

Donation to the General Fund (non-restricted use) \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ email _____

Please make checks payable to Qholaqhoe Mountain Connections.
P.O. Box 405, Honeoye Falls, NY 14472.
(A registered 501c3 non-profit organization. A tax receipt will be sent.)

You may also donate on-line via our website: www.qmconnect.org

Thank you!