

# QHOLAQHOE MOUNTAIN CONNECTIONS



P.O. BOX 405, HONEYE FALLS NY 14472



QMCONNECT@YAHOO.COM



518 732 4279

FALL 2018

## Fall 2018 Newsletter

By Lynn Minderman

Board Members: Debbi Hitchings, Linda Gorham, Roger Gorham, Kevin Koryto, Lynn Minderman, Pic Schade, Alyssa Souza

### *Qholaqhoe High School Scholarship Program*

We are just completing our tenth year of providing scholarships to children living in the small villages surrounding rural Qholaqhoe Mountain. Currently sixty-eight students with individual sponsors are now sitting for their final exams. Three board members will be traveling to Lesotho again in February to celebrate our five graduating seniors and get to know new students and their families.

It is not possible for us to manage this program without the volunteer help of teachers and administrators at QHS. They are the key to this programs success.



**Tlali (Joseph) Lengala**, Deputy Principal and English Teacher, is best known to students as Doctor Joseph. He keeps a small first aid kit and for many years has tended to minor cuts, bruises, scrapes with band-aids and comfort. Joseph grew up in Phoku, a small village just over and down the mountain from the high school. As the oldest son, he was responsible for his mother and his two younger brothers after the death of his father. His mother returned to school and is now an elementary teacher; his uncles helped care for the boys and Joseph secured a grant to attend the National University. This is the way families work together in the Basotho culture.

Joseph says, “I am happy to be working here in the community that molded me. I remain here even after 13 years because I believe I get the school to be great and that dream has not yet been realized. I think I will feel better if I leave this school as a better place with motivated students who are excited about education! QMC has helped the school and the community a lot. What really touches my heart is the opportunity given to poor kids to go through high school. Many of these kids’ parents would not afford as most are maids in South Africa.”

Joseph manages our college scholarship program. He helps students become adjusted to college life, a culture shock from the herding subsistence life they have led on the mountain to the bustling campus in the capital city. He personally takes them to their room, explains cafeteria meals, and helps them open a bank account

into which he deposits 110 rand (\$10) each month for personal spending. He, our board member and former QHS Peace Corps teacher, Kevin, keep in contact with students via Facebook and Messenger throughout the year. Joseph is a foundation for this program; the students and community trust him, as do we at QMC.



**Malechesa Hlasoa** has been teaching English and Sesotho at QHS for six years. She grew up in a small, rural village in a neighboring district. Five years ago she was able to attend a Peace Corps summer camp, GLOW (Girls Leading Our World), with 15 QHS girls. This camp is held throughout the 40 countries where Peace Corps serves and supports adolescent girls to attend and complete school and achieve their full potential. Girls realize their self-worth, their emotional strength and their ability to work together.

The QHS girls wanted the GLOW program to continue and with Malechesa's help they have succeeded beyond even their expectations. They meet twice a week for lunch, sing, dance, count the money they made selling treats to fellow students and make decisions about who needs what. They purchase feminine products, sometimes shoes, shampoo or soap to help girls in need. Malechesa feels "this program has helped girls very much because they are motivated and strong emotionally." We have posted videos of the girls on our QMC website ([www.qmconnect.org](http://www.qmconnect.org)). The power and strength of their singing and dancing is a lunchtime highlight for everyone. QMC promises to match the amount of money they make each year; last year that was 460 rand! (about \$40).

Malechesa also helps Linda, our board member, identify and measure students who need school uniforms. Linda is able to purchase uniform items before our yearly visit from a local store where we have a trusted relationship. We pay a neighbor grandmother who makes the girls' uniform skirts on her treadle sewing machine. Uniforms are handed down throughout the villages and students often attend with threadbare shirts and flopping sole shoes. It is common to see a young man holding his trousers up with string or handmade rope.



**Makabeli Tsilo** grew up in Liphofung Mokhotlong, a few hours drive up even further into rural mountains. She has been teaching economics and accounting at QHS for 16 years. She lives with her family in Butha-Buthe and travels by taxi up the mountain each day. She has been managing our Emergency Food Fund since it was started during the extreme drought five years ago. Teachers let Makabeli know when they see a student appearing hungry or ill. She interviews the student, even visiting the home village if necessary, and determines whether food supplies are needed. We began with six students receiving food once a month and this year there are 21 children who have no food at home, many living alone. Makabeli makes the drive to

Butha-Buthe in the rickety school Toyota truck, purchases food (eggs, maize meal, samp, flour, cabbage) and gives it to students. Many grocery stores sell expired canned goods and aged grain leaving children with diarrhea, but we now have a long, trusting relationship with a local grocer who knows Makabeli and QMC.



**Teboho Makai** is our newest counterpart at QHS. He grew up in the village of Monont'sa, just over the mountain and graduated from QHS. He has been teaching Development Studies and Sesotho for ten years and continues to live in the community. He coordinates the letter writing for all the QMC scholarship students, working with English teachers and students. He arranges for home visits and accompanies us during our yearly

Teboho and his wife and daughter.

work trip so that our sponsors can better know the families and village life of their student through pictures and interviews. “I graduated from QHS and will do anything with regard to helping students. They are grateful about sponsors and writing of the letters. The sponsorship helps them perform better and I am happy.”

Teboho knows everyone! When we had a young boy who was not attending school, Teboho walked to his village to check on him. The young boy told Teboho that he was embarrassed to come to school because he was living in an extremely small one-room rondaval with his mother and sister and had no privacy to bathe. Teboho arranged for bathing, I believe near school, Malechesa secured a uniform, Makabeli interviewed the student about food and he is now attending regularly. It takes a village to raise a child.

### ***QMC College Scholarship Program***



We are thrilled with our National University of Lesotho students! Our returning students, Ntsebo Balimo, Remaketse Molisana and Ts’epang Matli, have passed all their courses, two with honors. Ntsebo and Ramaketse are in their third year and Ts’epang is in her second.

**Ts’epang** sent this letter to all the people who have made it possible for her to attend university. “At my first day of arrival at NUL, I came along so many challenges ever in my life and it took me so much time to adapt to this place lifestyle. It was very difficult for me to spend a lot of time without people who I used to interact with; my family friends and neighbours. Every day when I woke up my heart was always painful. I was missing parents guidance, motivation and advice on every my action. During the {summer} break I would be at home helping my parents with harvesting, cooking for them and also cleaning. For that matter, cooking is my beloved chore. I really enjoy it and my mother would be so happy because she is going to rest. My parents and I are so happy that I have got this chance and I promise to work hard so that everyone can be proud of me.”



Our three new students, Moeling Ts’oenyana, Itumeleng Lengala and Karabo Tjoobe are in their first year. Kevin, our board member and former PCV and QHS maths teacher, called the students to let them know they had been awarded a scholarship for National University. He said they were quiet and subdued, but all three of them in letters said that their families were “overjoyed”, “cried and hugged”, “could not

believe it!” Doctor Joseph said the students asked how many cooking pots they should bring and when he told them they would be eating prepared meals in a cafeteria three times a day, they were baffled. It is always about food in Lesotho.

All three new students are adjusting very well and have the friendship and guidance of our three older students. QHS students stick together.



**Ts’epo Qamo**, one of our first college scholarship students, has graduated from National Health Training College with an Auxiliary Social Work degree. He now has a job at Butha-Buthe Hospital performing HIV testing. His job was possible because he received training and has skills that are needed in his country. He will now be able to help his mother, and younger sister. He is a success story for his family, village, high school and community.



Karabo with her mother, Puseletso, and her grandfather.



Moeling with his family: Maholla, his dad and Macacame, his mom.



Itumeleng with her dad,



The faculty and staff of Qholaqhoe High School.

Our QHS students would not be attending high school without your sponsorship and our QMC College students would not be able to attend college without your financial support. These children will be part of the solution to the poverty and hunger facing Lesotho.

Thank you. *Ke leboha haholo!*