

# PRAIRIE REGION NEWSLETTER

May 2014

## We Meet the African Grandmothers

The city of Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, is located in eastern Africa. Addis is situated in a valley surrounded by the brown and green Entoto Mountains. From my third floor hotel balcony, the sounds of children playing, distant traffic and music are ever present, but muted, as is the light wind stirring the trees outside. The smell of sweet incense drifts by occasionally.

With ten other Grandmothers, I have just returned from our first Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF) led project visit. We visited the NLK project in Addis. This project was started in 2006 by six women living with HIV/AIDS who wanted to improve the health and livelihood of women in their community living with HIV/AIDS. They receive financial support from SLF to provide free testing and counselling services, home based care and training, school fees for the children in their care, and vocational training for the Grandmothers to support themselves and their families.



Through a translator we heard “testimonies” from four representative Grandmothers who thanked us for supporting the NLK, which they said, literally saved their lives. These courageous women are caring as best they can for many grandchildren whose parents have died of AIDS, and they are so grateful to us, the Canadian Grandmothers, for our efforts. The stigma of HIV/AIDS is very real and many infected people are left to die alone.

The grannies set up a bazaar selling fresh vegetables, baking, crafts and textiles. We were so happy to interact with these kind women and buy some things to take home. I got a beautiful hand-woven scarf for 100 Birr – about 5 dollars. Our translator tied my hair up in the scarf in the Ethiopian manner and I was a big hit with the African Grandmothers. I was using my newly learned Amharic words for greeting and thanks, and that brought big smiles too. The grannies greet you with kisses on the neck four times and then a big hug.

The ladies prepared and served us lunch with traditional Ethiopian food which is eaten with the hands. Injera, a flat pancake-like bread, which is rather rubbery and slightly vinegary tasting, is rolled out on a plate. Portions of cooked vegetables, curries and stews are placed on the bread and then pieces of injera are ripped off to scoop up a mouthful of food. After lunch we all gathered around the coffee lady who performed the coffee ceremony, burning frankincense incense, roasting the beans and boiling the water over a small charcoal fire. Very strong coffee is served in tiny china cups with no handles. Ethiopia is the birthplace of coffee. Goat herders found that when their goats ate the red berries, they became lively, so that is how coffee was discovered!

The coffee ceremony traditionally serves as a venue for family or community discussion. Coffee is brewed and served until any problems are worked out. With the Canadian and Ethiopian Grandmothers in a circle, we asked and were asked questions. Some of the discussion centered around HIV /AIDS. The grandmothers told us that the children learn a lot in school about how to protect themselves from the disease. For example, traditional toothbrushes are sticks of eucalyptus wood which the whole family shares. Over time, the wood splinters which can be a means of transferring the infection, so the children tell the grannies not to share toothbrushes. Another discussion topic was when to tell the grandchildren if they are HIV positive.

I mentioned that my daughter had recently married and would they tell me about the Ethiopian traditions for weddings? They decided to show me by getting up to dance and, as I was the “Mother of the Bride”, insisted that I dance too. Several women stood up and began to gyrate their heads, chests and shoulders. Others started to sing. They had me gyrating to the delight or perhaps the embarrassment of the whole circle of women. It was a lot of fun! The rest of the Ethiopian Grandmothers clapped and made that strange noise in their throats called ululating. I’ve tried it. It’s not easy!

Our next stop was to visit the women who were being trained to sew embroidery and the loom weavers. I saw exactly how my scarf had been made on a loom with foot pedals and shuttle. It was so time consuming that each woman could only make two or three scarves in a day. These ladies are also given business classes so they can manage their own craft business. We were shown how they created their own co-operative VSL (Village Savings and Loan) where they can bring their money. They have a social fund as well which can be used for someone who may have a medical emergency or need school fees. Each member pays 50 cents a month to the social fund. Loans can be given for business start-up, but must be paid back with interest. The grannies were all so proud of their bank account books!

An altogether amazing day! We were so excited to meet the Ethiopian Grandmothers and they felt the same about us. We made some wonderful personal connections and we will hold these women in our hearts as we continue to speak about them and raise money to support them.

~ Nina Logan, Grands’n’More Winnipeg

## IDEAS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY

**Have you ever considered hosting a Fabric Sale?** Grandmother groups from Alberta in Calgary and Edmonton have successfully hosted sales for the past number of years. This year, Calgary in their 7<sup>th</sup> year of operation has made \$30,000!!! from helping people clean out their closets and basements of fabric, wool, knitting needles, crochet hooks, books, notions and the like. They host these events in local churches.



Members have first pick when they sort to “pick and buy” and also the Fundraising team takes the opportunity to look through for product materials that they can use.

The organizers charge a loonie to get in to the venue for the sale; however they caution to watch out for the fire code. Their sales have become so popular that they have line-ups out the door to shop!! As you wait in line, you can also learn more about the Grandmothers to Grandmothers movement as they have awareness, membership information, and donation envelopes available.

They have thought of having coffee and treats available for sale however caution that this is not good for the fabric sales. One group even had a local truck vendor but the food sales were so low that the vendor did not want to come back again.

At the Sale you can buy fabric for a \$1.00/metre (arm measure), 50 cents a ball for wool, patterns and books as well as knitting needles amongst other crafty items. They use school groups and corporate groups to help out as their “days of giving” support to pick up items for donors, to sort fabric, to set up the venue amongst other jobs. Leftovers go to local community groups, schools who use them for crafts and drama productions as well as a local boxing club who uses the scraps for punching bags! One woman’s junk is another’s treasure! The group is in the process of putting together a guide book to share with Grandmothers groups. However, we thought that we would “wet your appetite” for spring cleaning while raising funds for the G2G Campaign.

## NEWS FROM THE STEPHEN LEWIS FOUNDATION



**Aeroplane Miles Matching Days:** The SLF has set TWO days this year for matching contributions – a way to double our Aeroplane points. Save the dates of **May 27 and 28<sup>th</sup>** as they are SLF days to double your contribution to the Campaign. Please share with your members, friends and family because we all know how much we like to double UP! There will be a dedicated page on the SLF website that will be set up and all will be contacted with the information on how to contribute to these days.

**Sponsorship:** Does your group seek sponsorships from your communities? Do you have a stewardship relationship with local businesses or groups in your community? If so, Deb and Sheila would like to know how your group does this. The SLF and a small group from the Grandmothers Regional Liaisons are putting together ideas to share across the country. The aim is to build a resource regarding sponsorship “how-tos” and we would appreciate your good ideas!

For example, the “Grandmothers of Steele” in Sudbury have a **Sponsorship Corner** in their newsletter to showcase those who faithfully donate and sponsor their group. One member interviews the person from the corporation or the group and finds out about their personal orientation as to why they support the G2G movement. They explain how they have been involved and offer tips and suggestions for others who might want to donate in the future. Another suggestion is to host a Sponsorship or Donor evening with local groups or to use when the SLF African representative is in town as an invitational information event.

Your group’s Sponsorship package will reflect your group and its needs. So we would like to hear from you as to what you do in your community. Do you have a Lead donor or Community sponsors for your Fundraising or Awareness events? Do you have specific “asks” for the event such as a printing sponsor or a t-shirt sponsor ??? We look forward to hearing your wonderful ideas so that we can share them with the SLF and also with the GRLS across the country.

**Wakefield Grannies on YouTube:** Recently this YouTube film has been circulating within our networks as it features the Wakefield grannies and their experience on the Continent. While this film garners interest about the G2G Campaign which is positive, the content is not accurate as portrayed. Therefore, we are cautioned as to using it within our groups as some of the suggested activities require a lot of capacity building and local grandmother projects on the Continent may not be able to respond as might be suggested.

**Insurance Support BEYOND STRIDE:** **Q.** Is this possible for other fundraising events as well? **A.** No, it is not being coordinated by the SLF beyond STRIDE. However, local grandmothers groups can contact Kerry Smith directly at PAL Insurance in Ontario at 1-800-265-8098 ext. 226 to inquire about rates as they are SLF supportive.

**GRAN letter:** Did you receive the letter from Ilana outlining the SLF's position on the relationship between GRAN and the SLF? The SLF's hope is that it will provide clarity as to how each organization works in support of their mission, values and beliefs.

## FROM OUR REGION

**Grandmothers 4 Grandmothers Moose Jaw** will have a garage sale May 24 at St. Andrew's Church, Athabasca Street East. We are **not** accepting large appliances, sofas, or clothes, just smaller household items, please.

Our Grandparents' day fundraising supper last September made over \$1,300.00, which we sent off to help the children.

**Grandmothers 4 Grandmothers Moose Jaw:** On April 14<sup>th</sup>, Grandmothers 4 Grandmothers Moose Jaw was given an award from the Wakamaw Rotary Club (Moose Jaw) at their Award ceremony for their work in helping the grandmothers and children of Africa. Check out the link below to read their exciting news!

*Congratulations*

[http://www.discovermoosejaw.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=35518&Itemid=902](http://www.discovermoosejaw.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=35518&Itemid=902).

**Grandmothers 4 Grandmothers in Regina** need to promote its May 9<sup>th</sup> dinner, and Sheila Fahlman's desire to tell about her Africa trip, came together in an interview on the local Global Morning News program. Click here to view the 3 minute clip: <http://globalnews.ca/video/1305038/grandmothers-for-grandmothers-2>

G4G Regina has several upcoming events and activities: Cathedral Village Arts Festival Street Fair where we'll have a booth selling merchandise; some Farmers' Markets – again we'll have a booth to raise awareness and sell merchandise. Then, in the fall, we will hold our second 'Art from the Attic' event on Saturday, September 20<sup>th</sup>. There will be more information in the next Update. And planning will begin soon on our 7<sup>th</sup> annual Scrabble for Africa event to be held on November 2.

**Grands 'n' More Winnipeg's Scrabble for Africa 2014:** Just over 80 players turned up to play Scrabble for Africa on Saturday, May 3, to raise money for the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Many Grands'n'More members and their friends and families as well as members of St. Andrew's Anglican Church were in attendance. They all cheated their way to a good time by buying permission to cheat when they spent a twoonie. Squeals of delight and much laughter echoed around the crowded hall of St. Andrew's Church. Door prizes were drawn, hundreds of Scrabble cookies and other delicious donated baked goods were consumed. Litres of hot coffee and tea kept the players wide awake and full of energy. They spent well over a thousand dollars at the Silent Auction, African Sales, cheating and buying Happy Monkeys.



Carol Pleon-Hosegood, creator of the Happy Monkey Club which balances healthy lifestyle and giving back, was our Honourary Grandmother for the event.

At the games, African jewellery and artifacts, made by ladies in the SLF projects which Deb and Nina visited, had sales of \$227.00. Pledges brought in \$4,960.00, and \$750.00 was raised in sponsorship.

Coffee donations and leftover cookie sales added \$125.00 to the total along with \$225.00 from the Silent Auction. The Rovers were able to sell \$494.00 worth of "cheats" and a new item, the 50/50 draw, netted SLF \$139.00, as well as one lucky player receiving \$139.00. **Total revenue to date is \$7,085.50.** Warm up to Winnipeg raised \$70.00 and the Grands'n'More sales table sold nearly \$700 worth! Some more donations are still expected to arrive from registered players who were unable to attend.



***Please let us know of any events your group is holding, or have held recently, and we'll post it here.***

If you would like more information on any of this material, please let us know. We are here to support you and your groups, so please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

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