

The Art of BET



The lovely view of mountains above was painted by Sister Marjorie Jean who discovered a talent for painting on her retirement to England from Lesotho. However the mountains are not of Lesotho but of the English Lake District where MJ, as she is affectionately known, has been living for the past few years. She has been busy painting framed pictures and greeting cards and selling them in aid of BET at exhibitions organised by Keswick Society of Art since she moved to Cumbria. In this year alone she has raised c£100 from sales of work. Other BET supporters also make cards and sell home-made goods in aid of the Trust. Perhaps you have a talent which could be used in this way. Be brave. Why not give it a go and see if you can help the Trust at the same time!

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2009 Newsletter

Khotso! (Peace!)

As we approach the start of another academic year in Lesotho (July rather than Europe's September) we say goodbye to 12 students leaving a record 62 to carry on their studies at seven schools, colleges and community training centres across the country. We await news of the new students to be supported from the Lesotho Committee for 2009/10.

Back in the UK we have spent the spring upgrading our published materials and the website so that we can keep supporters better informed about the work of BET and of developments within Lesotho. Why not visit www.basotho-educational-trust.org.uk and have a look for yourself. All comments are welcome and can be fed through to the webmaster by following the links on the site. Do also tell your friends about it and encourage them to add it to their favourites too.

Although the Trustees are feeling very positive about the work of the Trust at present, it is not an easy time. We recognise that our supporters are feeling the effects of the credit crunch and this has been visible in a fall off in individual donations during the first half of 2009. Lesotho, like all developing countries, is also feeling the impact of global recession, more so than countries in the wealthier north and unemployment has been rising while incomes fall. As a result, the work of the BET is even more important and we hope that our supporters will not only maintain their support for the trust, but may even increase it a little to help their neighbours in this mountain kingdom where the UN describes a significant proportion of the population as being "ultra" poor. We know from the feedback of students that those receiving training with BET support are going back to their communities to start up businesses and provide services to local people in skills ranging from catering and tailoring to bricklaying and motor mechanics. Amazingly, because of changes in exchange rates, the average cost in sterling of supporting a student ten years ago is still £160 per annum! So small amounts of money go a long way.

With best wishes for the remainder of the year and continuing thanks for your support and prayers,

Philippa Bird
Chair of UK Trustees

Basotho Educational Trust

St Rose, Peka

St. Rose is a well-established high school in Lesotho, established by the Roman Catholic Church and in the care of the Sisters of the Holy Names..

Here in the UK we are hearing quite a bit about education in Catholic schools and Convents, a lot of it detrimental, as people look back and feel they have been badly done by in some ways. But there are good things said also, and it is interesting that it is often the Catholic schools or the faith schools that attract large numbers of applicants when parents and children are making choices.

What on earth, you might think, has that got to do with education and training in Lesotho?

Well, true to its beliefs, the Christian missions in Basutoland, later Lesotho saw education as a valuable way of helping the people they had come to serve. All denominations established schools, and the Catholic missions put a great deal of money and personnel into theirs. Many of those schools are still serving the children and young adults of Lesotho, and giving them skills which hopefully will help to lift them out of the poverty trap.

St. Rose High School in Peka is one of these. Peka is a very small village, on the main tar road which runs north to south of the country. The school is on a splendid site above the road, with lovely views from many points in the grounds.



Only recently the staff at St. Rose realised that once their students had passed COSC (Cambridge Overseas School Certificate) which gives entrance to the local university, only a few would get a place at university. Others still needed some skill to help them to find work. So they opened a small computer section. I visited it 3 years ago, and it was a small classroom in an annexe off the main school buildings. They were offering mainly part-time courses and had one tutor. Now they are a Computer College, with their own buildings, and a larger staff.



At the end of 2008, 64 students graduated with a certificate in information technology. It was a fine ceremony, and many of those students now have a skill which might help them to get work in a country where unemployment is high and there is no unemployment benefit.

Among those students who graduated are four whose fees for the course have been paid by BET. Deciding to support students learning computer skills was a new move for the BET committee, but it felt right then, and it still does.

The staff at St. Rose have a friendly relationship with the committee in Lesotho and are very grateful for all the Trust does for their students. They see so much deprivation that it is a joy to them to be able to offer help.

So from us on the Committee, and from the students we have helped, and from the staff at the college, a big "thank you" for all you do to help and please keep it up, or even increase it.

Jean Mary CHN