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Hampton-Piggs Peak Newsletter



Over the past twenty years, the Piggs Peak Partnership has expanded the number of students it supports in Eswatini every single year. What began in 2006 with just 19 students at Fundukuwela High School has grown into a program now covering school fees for 500 students across seven schools. This remarkable growth has been made possible by the generosity of donors—motivated by a belief in the transformative power of education and the trust that every dollar is used effectively and transparently.

We take that trust seriously.



Each student selected for our Starfish Program is formally interviewed and assessed based on financial need, academic potential, and commitment to learning. Once admitted, students are individually monitored by our trusted partners on the ground in Eswatini. These local partners are the backbone of our work. Over the years, they have built strong relationships with school principals and administrators. These connections are essential to tracking student progress and ensuring full accountability.

One principal captured the strength of this collaboration in heartfelt terms: “On behalf of the parents of the students being sponsored, the students, and on my own behalf, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for the continued and unwavering support for the underprivileged families and their children even under these trying economic challenges globally. As a school, we really appreciate every effort being made by the organization to pay fees and to meet other needs of underprivileged children in the school, which you have been doing for some years now... Your support has and will continue to change their lives for the better.”

These relationships form the foundation of our program. But equally important is the clear, rigorous financial system that ensures each donation reaches the right hands. Contributions are first received into our Scotiabank account in Hampton. Many now arrive through the donation of shares, which are deposited into our Qtrade account, liquidated, and then transferred to Scotiabank. From

there, funds are transmitted to VFX Financial, a UK-based foreign exchange and payments company, which converts the Canadian dollars into local currency and transfers them directly to school bank accounts. The amounts sent match the exact school fees owed for each student we support. Once the schools receive the funds, administrators verify the amounts and sign a document confirming receipt on behalf of the named students.

We've built this system—and the trust that underpins it—through years of close relationships, personal involvement, and shared accountability on the ground. But we recognize that our donors don't always have the advantage of seeing that work firsthand. That's why we place such importance on transparency and clear documentation—so that our integrity is visible to those who make our work possible.



Over twenty years ago, I read an article in *Fortune* magazine that concluded that, of all the world's most pressing problems, the greatest return on investment could be achieved by tackling AIDS in Africa. That insight planted the seed for what would eventually grow into the Piggs Peak Partnership.

The article resonated deeply with me not just because of the human need, but because it framed the challenge in terms of impact and measurable return. The idea of maximizing the value of each dollar spent became a guiding principle.

While AIDS is no longer the public health emergency in North America that it once was, it remains one of the leading causes of death in Africa and the number one cause of death in Eswatini. The mission of the Piggs Peak Partnership is to reduce the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS in Eswatini, primarily by providing access to education for young people. We also buy food for families in need.

Last week, I had a video call with our key partners in Eswatini - Linda, Mathie, and TK - and one of our board members, Bev Harrison, who was visiting in person on behalf of the Partnership. Our team was proud to report that, halfway through the school year, none of the 500 Starfish students we sponsor had dropped out. They had also just delivered a month's worth of groceries to more than 30 families.

However, our partners explained that food distribution has become increasingly challenging. In the past, centralized drop-off points served multiple families efficiently. But word would spread quickly, and crowds of additional desperate families would arrive, overwhelming our capacity. As a result, our team now delivers groceries directly to individual homesteads, which is far more labor-intensive.

This prompted a thoughtful discussion about how best to allocate our limited resources. I raised the possibility of focusing more on education, given the increasing effort food delivery now requires. I framed education as an investment: it yields long-term benefits by empowering young people with knowledge, hope, and the tools to transform their communities. By contrast, food seemed like a short-term expense: consumed quickly, with no lasting return.

But our partners reminded me that, when students go hungry, they make desperate decisions just to survive - decisions that can derail their education entirely. In past updates, I've shared how some young women resort to transactional sex in exchange for food, leading to unplanned pregnancies and dropouts. Hunger also undermines students' ability to focus in class.

In truth, education and food go hand in hand. One supports the other. Without food security, the investment in education can't thrive. Our mission has always

been about sustainable impact. Sometimes that means meeting immediate needs to unlock long-term potential.



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