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Hampton-Piggs Peak Partnership Newsletter



The Piggs Peak Partnership is making a real difference in the lives of young people in Eswatini by providing access to education and essential food support. Our primary mission is to pay high school fees for students who would otherwise have no opportunity to attend school. In 2025, we're proud to be supporting 500 students across seven high schools throughout the country.

In addition to our ongoing sponsorships, we've recently stepped in to pay fees for 25 students who had been sent home after USAID funding was abruptly terminated. Without this emergency intervention, these students would have been forced to abandon their education entirely.

Our secondary focus is on helping families in dire need by providing monthly grocery packages. With over half of Eswatini's population living below the poverty line and facing chronic unemployment, this support is often a lifeline. In April, thanks to the efforts of our dedicated partners in Eswatini, we were able to deliver food parcels to 33 vulnerable families.

One of the families we helped was a child-headed household of one of our Starfish students, Minenhle Manana. Minenhle is a 15-year-old student in Form 2 (Grade 9) at Londunduma High School. The head of her family is her 17-year-old sister, Thembeke, who also cares for her 6-year-old sister, Cibile. TK tells us that Thembeke "was forced to leave school and get a job in a shop where she earns 1400 rand (just over \$100) per month just to buy food for the younger siblings."

While Thembeke dreams of returning to school, she has stepped up as the family's caretaker. Minenhle also plays her part, making sure her younger sister gets to school on time, well-fed and clean each day. TK shared how the recent food delivery relieved some of their financial stress, allowing Thembeke to buy Minenhle a school jersey and new school shoes. "This is where the food program makes a huge difference," he said. "The only stress I have is the 17-year-old girl who left school because she had to take care of her sisters." Sadly, stories like theirs are common in Eswatini, where the AIDS pandemic has left many families without adult guardians. Despite these challenges, these siblings remain resilient and loving, doing their best to survive and support one another.

Education remains the most powerful tool we have to break this cycle of poverty and give the youth hope for a better future. While we can't meet every need, our support helps keep families together and offers children like Minenhle a real

chance at a better life. Because of this program, she's now able to pursue her dreams in the classroom—while her family carries on, one month at a time.



The Piggs Peak Partnership, inspired by the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*, was proud to announce a special visit from its patron, Dr. Siyabulela Mandela, on May 20. Dr. Mandela will be speaking at the Hampton High School Theatre as part of a powerful conversation on the role of education and government in today's increasingly fractured world.

Ubuntu, often translated as “I am because you are”, reflects a belief in our shared humanity and the importance of compassion, interconnectedness, and mutual responsibility. It is a philosophy personified by Nelson Mandela. At his funeral in 2013, President Barack Obama stated: “He not only embodied Ubuntu, he taught millions to find that truth within themselves,” recognizing Mandela’s deep conviction that “there is a oneness to humanity; that we achieve ourselves by sharing ourselves with others and caring for those around us.”

Through the spirit of *Ubuntu*, the Piggs Peak Partnership draws a direct connection to Nelson Mandela and now to his great-grandson, Dr. Siyabulela Mandela. A respected academic and human rights advocate, Dr. Mandela is a Research Associate at the Centre for Security, Peace and Conflict Resolution at Nelson Mandela University. He has presented scholarly work and spoken internationally on human rights, peacebuilding, and global development.

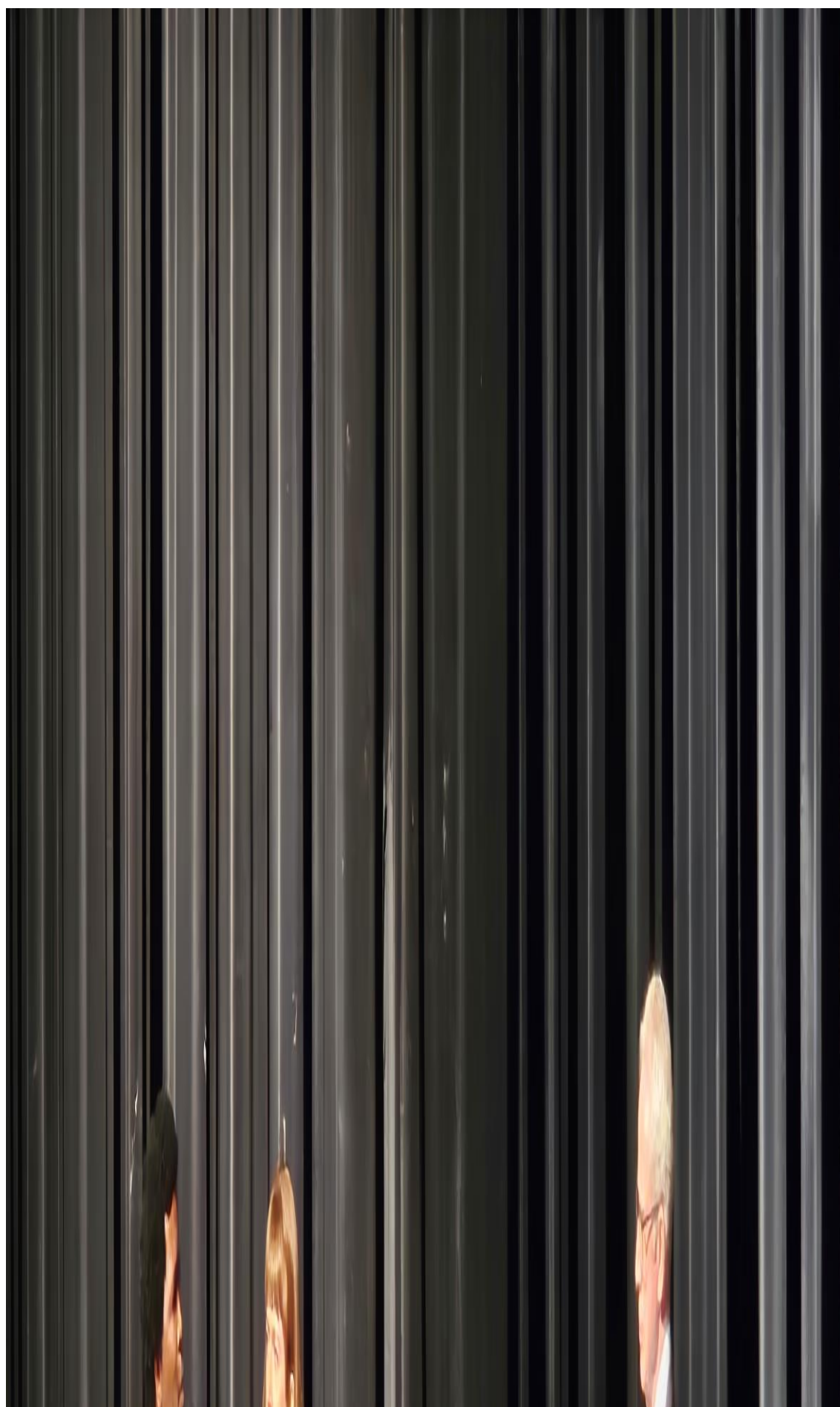
Onstage with Dr. Mandela, the Honourable Dr. Claire Johnson, New Brunswick Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Mark Bettie, Chair of the Piggs Peak Partnership.

Together, we had a timely and thought-provoking conversation titled “**Should Government Have a Soul? The Role of Education.**” This discussion will explore critical questions:

- Should governments prioritize international humanitarian aid, even in an age of increasing isolationism and nationalism?
- What is the moral responsibility of governments when crises affect vulnerable populations around the world?
- Should publicly funded education reflect national values? How should it contribute to shaping the next generation of global citizens?

The talk also examined the impact of the U.S. administration's pivot toward isolationism, which has included the withdrawal of USAID funding from countries such as Eswatini and South Africa—cutting off crucial support for programs like antiretroviral therapy and education.

The event aimed to challenge and inspire, asking whether foreign policy should go beyond the transactional. Citing US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's criteria for every foreign policy decision his State Department will make under the leadership of President Donald Trump - "Does it make America safer? Stronger? More prosperous?" - the speakers examined whether governments should consider a higher moral calling: the greater good.



On May 20, Hampton High School played host to a timely conversation on global leadership, morality, and compassion. The event, organized by the Hampton–Piggs Peak Partnership, welcomed Dr Siyabulela Mandela — great-grandson of Nelson Mandela and patron of the Partnership — alongside Minister of Education Claire Johnson and Partnership Chair Mark Bettle. Together, they tackled a pressing question:

Should governments be guided by empathy, justice, and humanity — should they, in other words, have a soul?

The discussion came against the backdrop of a concerning global shift. Around the world, many nations are turning inward — reducing humanitarian aid, prioritizing national interest, and treating international support more as a transaction than a moral responsibility. The audience was reminded of the criteria guiding foreign policy decisions under President Donald Trump’s administration: *Will it make America safer, stronger, or more prosperous?* One audience member said she was “mortified” by this. “We are not talking about getting a return on investment,” she said. “This is a human moral issue and governments today are failing.”

Dr Mandela offered a broader context. He did not excuse the shift in policy but acknowledged it as part of a deeper trend — a reflection of citizens worldwide who feel ignored, frustrated, and eager for fundamental change. His presence brought a powerful reminder of his great-grandfather’s legacy — a call for moral strength and the courage to lead with compassion, even in turbulent times.

Minister Johnson emphasized the vital role of education in shaping the outlook of future leaders and giving them a global, rather than insular, perspective. When

asked how to respond to the argument that domestic needs should always come first, she was clear: “They are not mutually exclusive.” She reminded the students that living in an affluent society gives us the unique ability — and responsibility — to help both at home and abroad.

The conversation also turned to the importance of community-based initiatives like the Piggs Peak Partnership. Mandela emphasized the value of partnerships grounded in understanding and trust, noting that organizations like ours are often better equipped than governments to identify real needs and respond effectively and with precision.

As the session ended, a final message was offered to the audience: hold onto hope — the hope that governments can, and will, act with a soul. But even when they do not, individuals can. Even when leaders retreat from compassion or neglect moral responsibilities, each of us has the power to step forward — to care, to connect, and to act.

That belief is at the heart of the Piggs Peak Partnership. It reflects the spirit of *Ubuntu* — the belief that we are all bound together. And it is what gives hope: that ordinary people, inspired by principle and compassion, can still shape a better world.





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