

# Zimbabwe Run and Fair Recap

By Ellen Clark, Meet Director and President of The Sustainable Living Foundation

Submitted on April 3, 2014

The motto of The Sustainable Living Foundation of “Be Fit! Create art! Help Others” came to fruition at The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Run for Zimbabwe Orphans and Fair on Sunday March 23 in Mountain View at St. Joseph School. People from many cultural and ethnic groups across California feasted on a sadza buffet from Zimbabwe, danced to two Zimbabwean bands—Chinyakare Ensemble and Sadza—and experienced the culture of Zimbabwe through The Batsirani Crafts booth, nine children’s game booths, a Children’s African Art Exhibition and nine African animal mascots.

The Opening Ceremony included a proclamation to The Sustainable Living Foundation by the mayor of Mountain View, Chris Clark; the singing of the US National Anthem by Anelle Garcia (an alumna of St. Joseph School) and the singing of God Bless Africa in the Zulu tongue by St. Joseph 8<sup>th</sup> grader Kela Choates. A minute of silence was observed by the assembled crowd for Fr. Eric Freed who died on January 1<sup>st</sup> and was a supporter of the Zimbabwe Run.

There were 353 runners in the 11 races that featured a 220 yard preschool race, a ½ mile kindergarten race and nine mile races for grades 1-8, high school and post high school; 202 volunteers and an estimate of 300 spectators and fair goers. In total, there were close to 850 attendees at the event. The high schools of the Bay Area really took to heart the idea of helping others. The Zimbabwe Ambassadors Megha Agarwal (St. Francis), Paola Campos (Los Altos HS) Tiffany Wu (Los Altos HS) and Jose Martinez (Foothill College) -- rounded up volunteers from Los Altos High AVID Program, Los Altos Honor Society, St. Francis Boys’ and Girls’ cross country teams, Apollo Alternative School in East San Jose; Paly High School, Homestead High School, Fremont High School and Gunn High School. Bill Clark, the coach for the West Valley Track Club and CFO of The Sustainable Living Foundation, took sign-ups from his running group informally known as the “Stanford Chip Running Team” and Ellen gathered sign-ups from The Day Worker Center in Mountain View who set up tables and chairs.

If we were to give a ‘Top Family Award’, the Mavhera family from Moreno Valley near Riverside and the Knuth family from Sebastopol would tie! Tamar Knuth, age 6 from Sabastopol Charter, won the Girl’s division of the Kindergarten ½ mile in 3:56. Minutes later, Jonah Knuth grabbed the top spot for the boys’ 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade mile in 7:16. Then, Gray Mavhera Jr. age 10, blasted through the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade mile in a time of 6:18 with Aaron Knuth placing second in 6:25. Fifteen minutes later, Kela Mavhera won the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade mile in the time of 6:19 and captured the fastest girls’ time for grades 1-8. Then, to round out the day, Gray Mavhera Sr. at age 44 placed third in the post high school mile in 4:55. Gray Mavhera is originally from Zimbabwe and was the country’s top runner in the 1980s. There were three course records set in other races throughout the day. Micah Robinson, age 6, from St. Andrew’s School in Saratoga ran 3:26 in the ½ mile run. Angelica Chou, age seven, of Covington School wowed the crowd with a course record that Gray Mavhera said would be “extremely tough to break in the future”. Angelica broke the old course record by Kelly Duran by 40 seconds and was all alone at the finish in the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade girls’ mile in a time of 6:49. The last course record of the day was set by Phil Pompei, the coach of the St. Francis High School cross-country team. He broke his own course record (set in 2013) by cruising to a 4:33 over the course that features two u-turns. Other winners included: Milla Gendre, 57 sec. and Benjamin Laris, 53 sec. in the preschool 220 yard race; Bethany Chan, 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade, girls’ mile, age 8, 6:29 Meyerholtz School (Santa Clara); and Aryan Chaudhayry, 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade, boys’ mile, age 11, 5:51, grade 6, Stratford School. The featured 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade girls’ mile was won by Ally Lai, age 13, 6:25

of Graham Middle School and Neerav Gade, who repeated as 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade boys' mile champion. Neerav is age 13, from St. Andrew's in Saratoga and ran 5:25. The top high school runners were: Ben Zaske, age 15, in 4:54 of Los Altos High School and Elodie Cerauskis, age 14, also of Los Altos High School in 8:25. The top female runner was Los Altos teacher, Stephanie Downey in 6:08.

For the Children's African Art Fair, there was tremendous involvement by The Community School of Music and Arts with 47 entrants from four schools—St. Nicholas, Springer, Landels and Castro-- with another 28 entrants primarily from St. Joseph School. Toy hippos were awarded to the top artists in grades pre-school through grade 8. Owen MacKenzie of Egan Junior High not only ran a quick paced 5:51 for the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade mile placing 4<sup>th</sup> but completed a beautiful painting of a lion. Another stand out artist was Mandy Lai, age 11 and a Huff Elementary student who painted three animals on the Zimbabwe Run awards victory stand. She was given the Meet Director's Award.

As of April 3, 2014, we do not have a final figure on how much money was raised for the 93 orphans of Makumbi Children's Home in Zimbabwe. Once we have the figure, it will be posted on our web site. We are hoping to match the amount raised in 2013 of \$34,000 by the end of this year's campaign on May 30 when the funds are sent to the orphanage. At present, the figure stands at about \$32,000. Definitely, though, there will be funds for the orphanage's planned capital project-- The Sister Batsirai Cottage that will house and educate eight 18 year old girls who have aged out of the orphanage.

Definitely, The Zimbabwe Run and Fair has taken a joyful "life of its own" the past couple months. It has been my pleasure-- along with the Zimbabwe run ambassadors, African puppets and animal mascots—to perform 19 poetry slams in schools and bookstores (Linden Tree and Know Knew Books) across the Bay Area leading up to the Zimbabwe Run. Then, on race weekend, members of our family—all the way from Liverpool England (Kacey and Charlie Jones), Oakland (Mike and Chanthly Clark) and Capitola (Will and Kristin Clark with 23 month old granddaughter, Ellie) —showed up to help. We are grateful to our web designer, Tatiana Promessi, who has done an incredible job of keeping up with all the exciting changes and late breaking news and designing the most beautiful web site ever! We also, obviously, could not have done this meet without the tremendous support of The Wakerly Family Foundation who underwrote the expenses for the meet.

We look forward to the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Run for Zimbabwe Orphans and Fair in the spring of 2015. The tentative date is Sunday March 29 in the afternoon, again at St. Joseph School in Mountain View. In 2015, we will celebrate the year of the cheetah and of the TEAM! Our renewed emphasis will be on getting even more elementary school x-country teams to participate. It only takes five kids from a particular school for a particular race. So, for example, in the Girls' 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade mile, there could be five girls from "Jane Doe School". Also, in 2015, we are initiating a program whereby clubs, organizations or teams can get together to sponsor an orphan for either a half-year (\$175) or full year (\$350). There is the "Power of One" and there is also the "Power of Many"! Each person could chip in a few bucks and then, soon, you have the whole amount collected! Imagine your team or club posted on our web site with these words similar to this:

The Really Cool Philanthropic Club of The Bay Area—Orphan Sponsor

Thanks again for everything and see you at the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Run, if not sooner!!

