

NEXUS

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*Ordinary people can make an
extraordinary difference*

Rainbow of Hope Goes to Jamaica by Patrick Hessel



Audley In His new home with Pat Hessel and Cheryl Budzinski from ROHFC

When most people think about Jamaica, they get visions of long, white sand beaches, luxury resorts, and fancy drinks with tiny umbrellas. And while Jamaica is a popular destination for vacations, most of the country suffers from significant poverty. It is one of the poorest countries in the western hemisphere.

In many developing countries, churches and other religious organizations are very involved in the provision of social services and often also in providing educational resources for the poorest of the people.

This is true in Jamaica where the Diocese of Mandeville, in the middle of the country, covers the poorest areas of the country. Rainbow of Hope for Children recently engaged with this Diocese in two projects; one addressing immediate, urgent shelter needs, and the other, helping to shape a brighter future for the young people through education.

The Diocese operates a housing ministry that provides houses for persons in the most desperate situations. Many of the poor in Jamaica live in what we would call shacks, and others who are unable to afford housing live with friends or relatives, often in overcrowded conditions. The houses provided by the Diocese are very simple: typically, two or three rooms. The sort of things that we take for granted in a house, like insulation (not needed in their climate), electricity, plumbing and drywall, are not included. The houses are just basic shelters. Those receiving the houses often improve them over time, as they can afford.

Rainbow of Hope for Children supported the construction of two such houses. The first was built for Chevelle. Chevelle has three children and is the family's primary breadwinner, working odd jobs to eke out a living. She and her children were sharing living space with relatives. She was gifted some land by a relative and a local priest brought her situation to the attention of the Diocese. The picture below, taken on a recent visit to Jamaica, shows Chevelle on the porch of her new house, along with Cheryl Budzinski and Pat Hessel, who are board members with Rainbow of Hope for Children.



The other home was for Audley and his young son, who had been living in a very dilapidated structure on a property that he owned. After suffering a stroke, he was unable to walk properly. He survives by subsistence farming.



Audley's former home

The Diocese of Mandeville operates a technical school in the city of Mandeville. The Catholic School of Technology focuses on training in hospitality and automotive skills. It is a collaboration between the Diocese and the Jamaican government. The government provides the teachers, and the Diocese is responsible for the maintenance of the buildings.

Graduates of the school are employed in the tourism and hospitality sectors, in hotels, restaurants, and cruise ships. Those graduating from the automotive program are employed in mechanic shops. Their graduates are highly sought after.

Rainbow of Hope for Children provided funding for some much-needed upgrades. Some interior walls and even some desks had suffered termite damage. The roof covering the auto pit was badly damaged and needed to be replaced.

The school needed painting, inside and out. Rainbow of Hope for Children funded the purchase of three industrial stoves for the Hospitality program.



The auto repair pit with a new roof and repairs to the structure

We are hoping to continue our involvement with the Diocese of Mandeville. The Catholic School of Technology received funding for a new building from a Florida-based charity called Food for the Poor. The funding allowed them to build the basic structure, but it requires some interior walls and partitions to make it functional as a teaching facility. We are hoping to raise \$24,000 to accomplish that work.

On our recent trip, we also visited a “basic school” (a school for children aged 3-6) in Hayes, Jamaica. We visited during a heavy rainstorm and witnessed significant leaking in the roof, and gutters that were totally dysfunctional. We have invited a proposal to address those issues and estimate that the cost will be in the region of \$20,000.

Although we don’t have immediate plans to build more houses, the need for safe housing is tremendous. The cost to build a house is only \$8,100.



Mrs. Plummer, the Director of the Catholic School of Technology standing with Cheryl Budzinski and Pat Hessel, aside one of the three industrial stoves purchased for the Hospitality program.



**The Annual General Meeting
will be held by Zoom
on June 15, 2024 at 9:30 AM
Alberta time.**

Zoom invitations can be obtained by email from Charlie, rohfc2017@outlook.com

Profiles of Board Members

George Bunz President of ROHFC 2000-2017



George and Simon Ngumbi in Kenya

As the editor of the Nexus, I thought it would be interesting to have some long serving board members share their experiences with Rainbow of Hope for Children giving us some insight into how and why they got involved and where they see the organization going. In addition to learning more about the people of Rainbow we get some history as well. Here is my interview with George Bunz, president for many years and currently a board member.

1. Tell us about your childhood and working background. What are the things in your life that brought you to where you are today?

Everyone thrives in a caring and support environment. I was fortunate to have such a family and community, stretching my legs in the village of Muenster, Saskatchewan. My parents and neighbours reached out for the well-being of each other. I remember my father making his voice heard on social issues such as loss of jobs with the increase in mechanization. Every youth has a hero who influenced them in their childhood. My anchor was my baseball coach, Leo Webber. His coaching went far beyond the ball field, to the theatre of life. He was a stalwart servant leader, a lifelong mentor to me and supporter of ROHFC. I attended high school at St. Peter's College at Muenster. The ethos of the College and certainly my English teacher, Fr. James Gray, OSB, and later Fr. Lawrence DeMong were significant influences on me. Fr. James was a brilliant scholar and editor of the *Prairie Messenger* in the 1960's to early 70's. The publication focused a lot on Vatican II Church reforms and nourished a profound interest in social justice and the Abbey mission in northeast Brazil. In 1979, Al Gerwing, visited the mission and began walking the road less travelled in Brazil. In the 1980's and 90's, I was an avid reader of Al's column in *The Prairie Messenger*, speaking out against injustices of the people of northeast Brazil, never thinking that someday I would set foot there.

My wife, Louise, and I first taught at Beauval and Southend, Reindeer Lake, in northern Saskatchewan. We had many opportunities for leadership and volunteer service. I have fond memories of bringing my students south to play hockey at Muenster and Humboldt. Some have shared with me what this trip meant to them, not just hockey but also the hospitality of the families with whom they lived. In the late 60's, I served as Principal of Lloydminster Catholic Schools. In 1972, western Arctic beckoned, and our family of three children moved to Inuvik, NWT where I served as Vice-principal of Sr. Alexander Mackenzie School and for two years replaced the principal on sick leave. Here, we enjoyed multiculturalism in full bloom and further opportunity for leadership and service. I became President of Minor Hockey, coached and refereed every level of minor hockey and organized trips for teams to travel as far away as Yellowknife and Frobisher Bay (now Iqaluit) in the eastern Arctic. In 1980, I was appointed Deputy Superintendent and a year later Superintendent of East Central Alberta Catholic Schools, serving Wainwright, Vermilion, Vegreville, Provost and Killam. It was here I learned that Al Gerwing had been Principal of Blessed Sacrament School in the 1950's and had produced several musicals in Wainwright.

2. How did you get interested in international work? In ROHFC in particular?

In early 1995, Al Gerwing came back to Wainwright to produce with Theatre 75 "The Sound of Music" to raise funds to build a Girls' Home at Fundanor, a home and school for homeless children living on the streets at Palmeiro dos Indios in Alagoas, Brazil. He asked me to audition for the role of Captain Von Trapp. The musical was a huge

Jan 21-04 Discussing project at Palmeres



success, six sold out performances raising about \$14,000. In 1997, Al engaged his former school to raise funds. Blessed Sacrament School raised \$12,500, coining their Advent fundraiser “Rainbow of Hope for Children”. In February 1999, Al took Louise and me, along with a few Wainwright supporters, to visit his projects in Alagoas. It was my first encounter with poverty in its extreme - families displaced, hunger, domestic violence and government indifference. I said to Al that I can’t see how we can make a difference. He told me that’s what he had said when he first set foot here, but then one woman told him, “Senhor, the ocean is made of little drops of water and each drop is important to the ocean”. The light flicked on, and I realized that each person to whom we give a helping hand makes a difference to that person and the world. This lesson touched me to the core.

Al Gerwing was a director of St. Joseph’s Save the Children Club (SJSCC), an Edmonton school-based non-government organization (NGO) founded by Hank and Tillie Zyp. The NGO received funds and managed Al’s projects in Brazil. With increasing CRA regulations and

reporting, they were looking for someone with leadership and administrative experience to take on these responsibilities. I retired in August, 1999 after 19 years as Superintendent of Schools and began teaching Catholic School leadership and Research in Religious Education at Newman Theological College to teachers and school administrators from Alberta and Saskatchewan. Hank Zyp invited me to a few meetings to see if I was interested in becoming a director. At the Annual Meeting in October 1999, I accepted the duties of President. Two months later at the turn of the century, Hank proposed a By-law amendment to change the name SJSCC to Rainbow of Hope for Children Society (ROHFC), since SJSCC had expanded far beyond St. Joseph High School proper.

3. What are the rewards you get from doing this? Tell us about one or two special instances that you’ve felt very good about a project or other work that you’ve done.

Where does one even start? First, it is a privilege in my retirement to have served as president of ROHFC for 17 years and to pass the torch to a dedicated new president, Charlie Matt, and to continue working with him and the NGO as a Director. Over these years, ROHFC has enabled over 1500 Canadians and students in over 30 schools to touch the lives of thousands, especially women and children, in Brazil, Peru, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana, Indonesia, India, Nepal, and Jamaica to give them a helping hand to improve their conditions. A tradition of ROHFC is to visit our partner organizations and beneficiaries to monitor projects and build trusting relationships. It



Al Gerwing and George with Brazilian families in 2004

is especially rewarding to witness the impact ROHFC has made in providing access to education, health and eyesight care, water and sanitation, food and housing, women’s organizations, entrepreneurship, and empowerment, agriculture and disaster relief.

On our first visit to Brazil, we met up with Father Lawrence DeMong, spending his holiday at the Abbacy mission. Severe drought plagued the land and fields were strewn with cattle starved to death. It was a difficult time especially for families working for meagre wages on cane plantations. The agriculture economy was in turmoil, job layoffs led to massive unemployment and families were displaced. Tent cities popped up everywhere. We came upon an encampment of 120 families along a roadside. When they knew they were safe with us, they rang a makeshift bell and gathered the community together, dancing and singing

a welcome. They thanked us for stopping to hear their story because everyone else just drove by. They had been working on a cane fazenda (plantation) earning \$5.00 *reals* (\$2.50 Canadian) a day and paying R\$1 *real* rent to the fazendeiro who owned the shanties where they lived. When they asked for a \$1 *real* wage per day increase, the fazendeiro got angry, laid them all off and trucked in contract workers from Maceio. He demanded that the families leave his shanties.

They refused to leave their long-time homes. Shortly after midnight families awakened in panic, their community ablaze, frantic fathers carrying their children and mothers cradling their babies as they fled to escape the flames. The fazendeiro had sent his men on horseback to torch his shanties. Now they were being threatened again. Because their encampment encroached on another fazenda's unused plot, they were given notice by that fazendeiro to leave. Every day as we travelled to projects, Fr. Lawrence arranged for us to purchase a vanload of bread, water and milk for them. Before our return to Canada, they gathered around us, dancing and singing a blessing to us. It was a touching moment for me.

I recall after the 2001 earthquake in El Salvador, ROHFC rescued 23 families in La Violeta whose homes and entire plots had crashed down the steep slopes onto the plantation below where they worked for meagre wages. The plantation owner abandoned them and because these families did not own their homes, they were not eligible for their government



George with Ricardo and Maria's new home at Arcoiris

aid nor international aid administered by their government. With matching grants from the Alberta Government Wild Rose Foundation, ROHFC purchased sufficient stable land, built homes and purchased a large plot for a community garden to feed their families. The people voted to put the legal titles of their land in the names of the women and 3 male orphans, so the women would have a home even if their partners left them. An NGO from Spain also helped so they named their new community Arcoiris-Espana (Rainbow-Spain). When we visited them, an elder said, "Our ancestors were discovered in the 1600s and today we have been discovered again!" I felt good to be present in solidarity with these families, knowing there is a place for small volunteer NGOs like ROHFC to reach the poorest of the poor, who often are by-passed by large international NGOs and governments.

4. What are some of the biggest challenges you've had? Do you see upcoming concerns for organizations like ROHFC?

Operating a registered fully volunteer charity is a big challenge. As well as setting policy and making project funding decisions, directors are involved in project management, administration, monitoring, fundraising, and public engagement. To do that requires time. So, it is challenging to attract youth who must give their time and energy to support their own families. Fortunately, we have been able to recruit a good slate of directors and officers willing to give their time. My concern is that many supporters and directors are getting up in age, so the biggest challenge will be to expand our base to attract more younger generation leaders and supporters.

PROJECT UPDATES

CIS Scholarships in El Salvador:

ROHFC supports the Centre for Exchange and Solidarity (CIS) Scholarship Program on the Espiritu Santo Island in El Salvador. This is a beautiful, peaceful, but isolated island located off the coast of El Salvador. The island has elementary schools but children have historically had to stop their education after elementary school as the daily boat fare to attend high school is \$4.00. CIS scholarships offer small monthly payments to help with costs associated with high school and university degrees. They also create a community of students who participate in community campaigns and attend workshops to promote personal growth

The 26 Scholarship students from high school and university carried out clean up campaigns around the island including mosquito prevention, planted trees and supported the community water filter program through education. They also attended on human rights, family matters, the environment, sexual and reproductive education, creative writing and budgeting which support personal growth and health communities. The past two years have been

particularly rough on the island due to the current political climate in the country. The government has suspended some constitutional human rights country-wide to combat violence and gang activity. On the island, this resulted in a number of people being detained in 2022, without access to a defence lawyer or standard judicial processes. These people have declared themselves innocent of any wrongdoings but have not been freed. This has had a negative impact to the close-knit island, affecting mental health and fear of travelling to attend classes.

Despite mounting challenges, this year, three students graduated from university and two graduated from high school thanks to the scholarship program.

2023 University Graduates



“The scholarship program has propelled the community so they can advance together, empowering women. It is providing youths an opportunity to continue our education and has helped many families to progress significantly, for example, by donating tanks and filters to the school and to the community.”

Maternity ward in Ussongo, Tanzania:

Some years ago, volunteers like Norm Duerr and Arlene Jule from the Humboldt area volunteered and fundraised to help the Daughters of Mary expand their little health center in Ussongo, Tanzania. ROHFC also partnered with the Daughters of Mary to build some classrooms for older students to learn career development skills and to educate children in English for success in the work world. Now the Daughters of Mary want to expand their health center to include a larger maternity ward.

In recent years more and more women are coming to the health center to have their babies and the small, old labor ward cannot handle this influx. For example, it is not uncommon for women to have to share beds. The new facility will have a delivery room, post delivery room, operating facilities to perform Caesareans, and other support facilities. These improvements will lower the maternal and newborn death rates through better hygiene.

Our past partnerships in Ussongo have worked well and provided many services for the local community and we hope this one will continue that relationship.



At the opening of classrooms in Ussongo in 2019

Tabora School for the Deaf in Tanzania:

Recently we told you about a small project to provide sewing, carpentry and computer equipment so that the older students in the School for the Deaf can learn marketable skills. It's been a huge success. The computer equipment has also been used by a high school that shares some space with the School for the Deaf. It's not only been a boost for the students but it has given teachers the opportunity to use computer equipment and the internet to prepare their lessons. In addition, it's brought the students with hearing impairments in closer contact with students in the regular school with helps with acceptance.

Because of their hearing difficulties the students are very visual learners and having access to things like YouTube videos and other visual aids is very helpful to their learning. It's also given them a recreational outlet. We will be putting together a project to send funds to purchase projectors and add two more computer classrooms.



Rainbow of Hope for Children's Current Projects

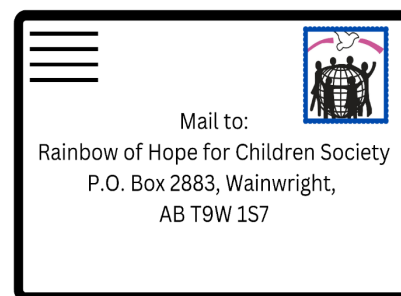
Your support is requested and appreciated for the following projects

Program Description	Funding Goals	Program Description	Funding Goals
Nwodua Library, Ghana	\$20,000	PAMBE Health, Nutrition, and Sanitation, Ghana	\$8,000
Tabora School for the Deaf & Mute, Ingange Computer Lab, Tanzania	\$40,000	Kinyambu & Area- Classrooms for Children with Disabilities, Kenya	\$35,000
Matumaini Classrooms for Albino Children Safety, Tanzania	\$10,000	Aeta Indigenous Communities Development Assistance, Philippines	\$10,000
Bongbini School, Ghana	\$15,000	CIS Scholarships, El Salvador	\$15,000
Grota da Alegria Education, Brazil	\$10,000	Mt. Moriah School, Jamaica	\$10,000
Ambrosina Young Women's Education, Brazil	\$10,000	Mandeville Housing and School of Technology Classroom Upgrades, Jamaica	\$10,000
Eye Health Care, Reducing Avoidable Blindness, Indonesia	\$20,000	PAMBE Future Projects, Ghana	\$10,000
Paso Puente Dignified Housing, El Salvador	\$8,000	Emergency & Disaster Relief Fund, Global	\$15,000

HOW TO DONATE

We thank you for offering a gift to any one of these projects and we are pleased to acknowledge your donation with an income tax deductible receipt. If you wish to donate to a specific project please include the information on the cheque memo and the e-transfer message box. If you are paying by credit card you will need to email us with the project you wish to support.

- **By cheque-** Please make cheques payable to the full name of the organization: Rainbow of Hope for Children Society.
- **By credit card-** be sure to include the 3-digit security code on the back of your card. That number is required by the credit card companies
- **By e-transfer-** Quick and Easy- We use auto deposit, no password required. Make your E-transfer to ROHFC Accounting – rohfc2018@outlook.com. Be sure to include the specific project you wish to support in the message box so we can direct your donations. ****Please include your name and mailing and/or email address in the message box so that we can send you a donation receipt**
- **By Canada Helps-** Quick & Easy- Be sure to select the specific project you wish to support: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/rainbow-of-hope-for-children-society/>
- **Donations of securities-** have a significant tax advantage. To donate shares please contact your broker to discuss
- **Donation of insurance policies-** You can donate insurance policies that you will not need in future. This has significant benefits. Contact your Financial Planner to discuss



Questions?

Contact Cheryl: 780-968-3952

THANK YOU!

Rainbow of Hope for Children gratefully acknowledges the support of all our donors and:

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