

Letter to the Editor,
(West Carleton EMC, August 11, 2006)

I am so pleased and amazed with the results of my Gigi Climbs Kili for Family Fundraising Kick-off BBQ that was held at my home on July 8th to raise funds for the Stephen Lewis Foundation's Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. This is a campaign to raise awareness and mobilize support in Canada for Africa's grandmothers who have lost their own children due to AIDS and are now raising their children's children, who in many cases themselves, are living with this horrible disease. We raised a total of \$4,049.35 which is 20% of my overall goal of \$19,335.60 (the height of Kilimanjaro).

The EMC family has been extremely supportive of my efforts and I certainly could not have done without your help. I can only hope that you and your readers will continue to follow my progress as I strive to reach both my fundraising goal and the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro by October 2007.

I would like to especially thank my BBQ sponsors and trust that they will stay the course with me: HSBC Securities; Gowlings, Lafleur and Henderson LLP; Dunrobin Village Meat & Grocery; and The Heart & Soul Café. These very generous businesses covered the entire costs for the day's events allowing all the proceeds to be directed to the Grandmothers Campaign.

And the day could not have been such a huge success without all the beautiful prizes and products, given by numerous small businesses and individuals, for the games, raffles and silent auction. A complete list of in-kind donors is available on my website at www.gigiclimbskili.com.

I have to say that I am totally humbled by the amazing support demonstrated by my family, friends, neighbours and this entire community. Thank you all for your kind words of encouragement, your generous donations to help the African grandmothers, taking the time to come out to the BBQ to show your support and the inspirational memories that I will carry with me to the summit.

On August 11th and 12th, I will be attending the Grandmothers Gathering in Toronto hosted by the Stephen Lewis Foundation, which will give me the opportunity to meet some of these wonderful African heroines and hear their stories first hand. I will also get to meet other grandmothers like myself who have created groups across Canada to support their peers in Africa. I am sure that these will be extremely emotional and heart wrenching days but I hope to bring their stories home to all of you to help us understand their needs and what we can do to help make their life easier and increase their chances of surviving the horrors of the HIV/AIDS African pandemic.

Our next fundraising event is a Line Dancing Workshop sponsored by The Crazy Soles at the Churchill Community Centre on September 9th. Since I've never tried line dancing, I will only be joining the beginner class. Why don't you join me? Register early for the day's workshops or simply come out for the evening's dinner, dance, raffle and silent auction. Hall capacity is limited to 150. The Crazy Soles have generously donated all proceeds to 'Gigi Climbs Kili for Family' for the Grandmother's Campaign.

Again I want to relay my heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you for your continued support of the Gigi Climbs Kili for Family fundraising efforts.

Gisèle Lalonde Mansfield