

# Canadian Aid for Southern Sudan Newsletter

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## LONDON'S TEAM

This entire issue of the Canadian Aid for Southern Sudan newsletter is dedicated to the visit of 13 members from London, Ontario and the difference they made in January 2006.

### A Trip Like No Other

Throughout the latter part of 2005, a number of citizens from London, Ontario approached CASS with a desire to accompany us to south Sudan and help in any way they could. By the time of the trip, 13 Londoners found themselves in the Aweil East area. What they discovered and accomplished fills the next few pages.

The team consisted of Jane Roy (President of CASS), David Tennant, Bill Tennant (David's nephew and member of the London Police Association), Alex Lau (Assante Wealth Management), Shaun Elliot (Executive Director of London YMCA), Kathy Mueller (co-anchor of the A-Channel six o'clock news), Wayne Jennings (A-Channel cameraman) and Jeff Lang (Stevenson & Hunt). In addition, four London firefighters, Rob Warren, Steve Beasley, John Peter and Angus McKenzie, took their holidays to assist in the trip. All of these individuals are available by contacting us at CASS.

The agenda was ambitious, ranging from filming a television documentary to expanding micro-enterprises and building the Canada School. Each team member played an important part and laid the foundation for a busy year ahead with our programs in 2006.

Enduring sickness and a harsh climate, the London team nevertheless left a clear impression for the people of Aweil East that Canada and its citizens remain committed to the ongoing challenges faced in the area. Bonds and friendships were established that will reap rich rewards in the coming years and will see to the ongoing building of civil society.

Thank you for your part in it all. Read on and see what a difference your generosity has made.



*London's Alex Lau makes a new friend*

## About CASS

Canadian Aid for Southern Sudan has been active in south Sudan since 1998. Since its original efforts to combat slavery in the early years, CASS quickly moved into the realm of school construction to assist in the education of those returning from slavery.

The organization's efforts now range from establishing micro-enterprises, growing Abuk's Herd (an initiative to provide goats to returning families), pioneering YM/YWCA programs in the south and women's empowerment initiatives. Find out more at:

[www.casscanada.net](http://www.casscanada.net)

# THE CANADA SCHOOL



CASS is cooperating with the Government of Canada in the building of the Canada School. Four firefighters from London travelled to Sudan to undertake its construction.



*Firefighters raising the Canada flag during construction. Angus, Rob, John and Steve, taking a break from the heat.*

## An Exercise in Patience

Funding for the Canada School is shared between CASS and the Government of Canada. Original plans involved working with Kenyan builders and local labour to construct the school over a period of three months.

But in mid-2005, four firefighters from London requested the opportunity to take on the construction and plans were put in place to begin the task in January 2006.

For several months, negotiations were held with Kenyan suppliers in hopes that all supplies could be shipped into the Aweil East region following the end of the rainy season in December.

The school itself was made of pre-fabricated material and sent into Sudan on two trucks from Nairobi. Cement, tools and other essentials were sent in with the shipment. Sand and aggregate (gravel) were to be found locally and be ready for the team when they arrived.

As with so much that transpires in Africa, and especially in the most remote part of Sudan, not all goes as planned. The school materials were there in advance of the team but there was no aggregate in the area and this greatly compounded the work for the firefighters and delayed the construction of the building. In addition, hammers were sent in that had no handles on them and these had to be crudely constructed from local timber.

Nevertheless, progress was made and the Sudanese were deeply thankful that these men had taken their own holidays to help construct something that was of primary

importance to the community. Hopes are to get it fully constructed by the time school begins in May.

The firefighters worked with former child soldiers during the last few days of construction, teaching them skills pertaining to levelling, preparing foundations, proper alignment and constructing upright beams.

The school was not finished as planned, but the process continues with local workers and it is hoped the buildings will be finished by May. We all owe a special thanks to this dedicated team of firefighters who not only travelled half a world away but also faced significant obstacles yet remained undeterred. Thanks to their efforts, people on the ground in Aweil East have seen Canadians in action.

## Abuk's Herd



CASS is continuing to grow the herd of goats that will eventually be given to returning slaves and refugees. For \$30, a goat can be provided that will form the basis of new hope for these returning families, as they seek to grow their own herd. Each family is given 3 goats.

## Gum Arabic

During the past 12 months you have heard from us concerning the exciting new developments about the harvesting and selling of gum Arabic - a natural commodity desired worldwide for use in pharmaceuticals and the food industry.

London developer David Tennant has been working on the gum project for the past year and it hasn't been an easy task. There was global research to be done, permits to be acquired, and perhaps most significant of all, transportation problems to be overcome before the initiative could get off the ground. Tonnes of gum have already been harvested and await shipment to Kenya but even still special permits have to be acquired.

With so many obstacles to overcome, one would have thought David could have grown discouraged. Instead he persevered and is hoping for a breakthrough in the gum business within the next few months.

People gather the gum from the huge forests in the region and are reimbursed for the product they collect. It is then placed in containers to be readied for the journey to Kenya. Once there, it is shipped to various places around the world where its qualities are highly prized.

Profits raised through the selling of gum will be turned back into local initiatives, such as schools, etc. Agreement on these projects is worked out with local officials on the ground and we await the success of the gum venture to undertake these plans.

## A-Channel in Sudan

Kathy Mueller of London's A-Channel declares it as "the trip of a lifetime," but in their own way both Kathy and cameraman Wayne Jennings made it an unforgettable experience for their viewers in London.

While in south Sudan, the A-Channel team put together a number of video installments that were edited and eventually aired during the six o'clock news the week following their return. While Londoners had often seen still pictures of CASS's Sudan efforts, the vivid images portrayed on their television screens introduced viewers to new realities - not only of Africa, but of the difference average Londoners were making in the lives of southern Sudanese.

Kathy and Wayne hope to put together a 30-minute documentary that will eventually be aired across the network. Their work introduced a new dimension of the situation in Sudan.

# SMART AID

## Sewing and Selling

Alex Lau, a London financial advisor, hopes to partner with another non-governmental organization in the region to educate women on sewing and marketing their products.

During previous CASS visits and meetings with women leaders the main request was for sewing machines for the making of textile products such as mosquito nets and clothing. The region was once known for the beauty of its textile products - 20 years of civil war have made that a distant memory. Enough of the older women remain to provide leadership in the re-emergence of this important micro-enterprise.

The micro-business cycle involves: 1) training and education of the women; 2) supplying sewing machines and materials to groups of women in their local community; 3) sale of products such as uniforms and clothes; and finally 4) repayment of a portion of the proceeds back to the programs by the women.

While CASS purchased a number of sewing machines to assist in training the women, it became apparent that our investment would be more effective if we harmonized our program with that of AMURT - an NGO based in Switzerland seeking to empower women through education. This organization has already set up the infrastructure for a training center and the ideal strategy would be a joint venture to implement both the training and the distribution of the additional machines upon completion of training.

Watch future newsletters for updates in this exciting new initiative.



*Sewing machines being unloaded, assembled and put to good use in Aweil East.*

# Expanding the YMCA



Canadian Aid for Southern Sudan was, for a number of years, the sole sponsor of YM/YWCA programs in south Sudan and that tra-

dition continues. Plans are now underway to expand our "Y" programming in Aweil East.

Shaun Elliot (pictured above) is the executive director of the London, Ontario YMCA and journeyed with CASS on this most recent trip to see what his organization might be able to offer in assistance.

Shaun fully entered into the experience of life in Aweil East, in the process gaining some productive ideas for what might work and be necessary in the region. He returned to London in hopes of undertaking the following:

- an educational fund to support attendance at secondary school (the nearest secondary school is over 600 kilometers away, requiring funding the southern Sudanese cannot afford).
- some year-round programming to include educational and physical activities for after-school, non-school days and during school breaks.
- starting a canteen/store to teach business skills and generate funds for ongoing activities.

# Water Solutions

South Sudan is continually touted as the "watershed of the Nile." This has been true for millenia. But things have been changing due to climatic fluctuations, two decades of war and a lack of knowledge as to how to keep water clean.

Jeff Lang, from Stevenson Hunt in London, was with CASS on this past trip in January and was immediately struck with the precarious state of water supplies in the Aweil East area. *E. coli* ratings were 15 times higher than the levels in Walkerton and also the water tables in the region appear to be dropping each year, signalling a troubling future.

Jeff researched as much as he could and is determined to do what he can to help bring London-based technology to the problem. Working with local businesses, he hopes to begin applying those solutions within the next two years.

Undertaking such a task only makes sense in an area that has already suffered enough misery. Medical clinics in the area will remain filled to capacity if people continue drinking water that eventually brings about disease on a large level. Far better to undertake a program of prevention rather than waiting until the inevitable health problems down the road become insurmountable.



*Jeff Lang with a new friend*

Investment in such a program complements CASS's increasing involvement in the area and will help the region to adapt to peace in ways that are sensitive to the local habitat. Watch for exciting new developments within the next few months as Jeff applies his considerable energies to this formidable task.

## Want to Share in the Opportunity?

*Although Canadian Aid for Southern Sudan continues to limit itself to smaller and more achievable tasks, the need for Canadians to help us meet those ends is always pressing. CASS is a volunteer organization and all monies raised go directly to the projects. Here are some ways you can help. Donations are tax-deductible and receipts will be sent out accordingly.*

- Abuk's Herd \_\_\_\_\_
- Canada School \_\_\_\_\_
- Women's Literacy \_\_\_\_\_
- Smart Aid \_\_\_\_\_
- One Year of School \_\_\_\_\_

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# TRIP IMAGES

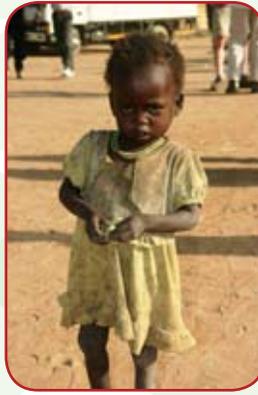
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A "Y" recruit



What it's all about



A humorous moment



Preparing the foundation for the Canada School



CASS's Jane Roy with adopted daughter Abuk and twin sister Achen



Kids watching their future school take form

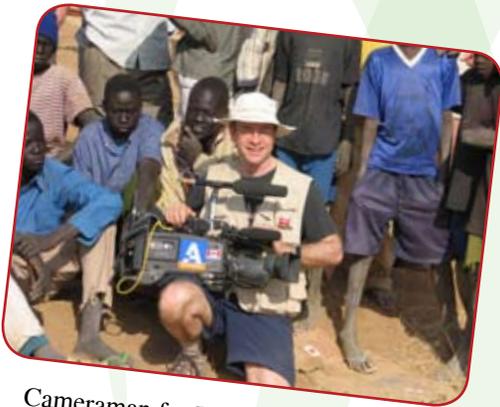
# TRIP IMAGES



Firefighter John Peter with former child soldiers



A-Channel co-anchor Kathy Mueller



Cameraman for London's A-Channel,  
Wayne Jennings



Collecting water and aggregate for the foundation of the Canada  
School



Dave and Bill Tennant showing media how gum  
Arabic is harvested



Unloading school supplies from the airstrip at  
Maluakon