

Sewpportive Friends

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Please join us on our journey to empower women in challenged areas through providing healthy, handmade feminine care products and the education to produce their own.

Hope provides Courage...

Hope provides courage. Courage brings change in thought and action.

I have seen the courage and change unfold in the communities visited by Sewpportive Friends in southern Africa and India. During our initial visits, many villagers did not appear comfortable discussing openly the subject of menstruation. Healthy sanitary options were not available or affordable. Many shared with me the unhealthy items they used, some of which had caused health issues. I could sense this was embarrassing for them to discuss. As I spoke openly with our new friends, the sense of understanding and comfort overtook their hesitation.

Before I founded Sewpportive Friends, I had never been comfortable as a public speaker. In fact, it terrified me. However, when I decided to present handmade feminine pads to the communities, I quickly had to see things differently. I had to find the courage to speak openly about a subject that was not an open subject to discuss. But, their joy, excitement and eagerness to learn, gave me the hope and the courage to continue. I have accepted that I do not have to be the best public speaker, I just have to have the willingness to speak up for those in need.

Many of the sewing teams have organized their group with rules and regulations that each member must follow. They want to succeed both personally and as a community. Provided with sewing machines, supplies and training has given them courage,

motivation and tools to make a change, improve life in their communities and beyond.

Some of the sewing groups are not only producing the washable pads, they are sewing track suits (for student's gym class), school uniforms and other sellable items. We are thrilled to learn that men and boys are participating in the sewing groups!

This year, we have continued supporting communities we have previously assisted, and have reached more than 10 new communities. Over 140 sewing machines were delivered and hundreds of meters of fabric and related supplies. We are overjoyed with the progress this year. **Many thanks to YOU for your support.** Together, we are providing hope and making a difference.



Hope does bring a change in thought and action. The smallest gesture can make a significant impact on an individual or community. In a world filled with despair and major challenges, hope will still bring strength and inspiration. One act of kindness, can change a life forever.

Wishing you a healthy and happy holiday season.

With gratitude and love,

Julie



Finally returning to Zimbabwe

March 2023

By Margie Bower

While a piece of my heart always stays in Africa, due to the pandemic, I wasn't able to go back to visit until this past March and it didn't disappoint. While a lot stays the same, there were some changes.

1. **Stayed the same**...Flight Delays: Often getting to Zimbabwe requires a connecting flight and ours was through Johannesburg, South Africa (Joburg). Due to flight delays getting to Joburg, all flights to Zimbabwe had left for the day. This meant we were spending the night in South Africa and we would be missing a full day of community visits in Zimbabwe, including Chisuma which was a village that I visited during my first trip to Zimbabwe 5 years ago. I miss these ladies tremendously.

2. **Changed**...Road Conditions: While there are no high speed interstates in Zimbabwe, in my years away, a great deal of mining for lithium for batteries had started in Zimbabwe by foreign companies. The huge trailer trucks were lined up along the road to the mines to remove all of this metal to transport it back to their countries, leaving Zimbabwe with nothing. These trucks constantly went up and down the road creating enormous pot holes which made the drive from Bulawayo to

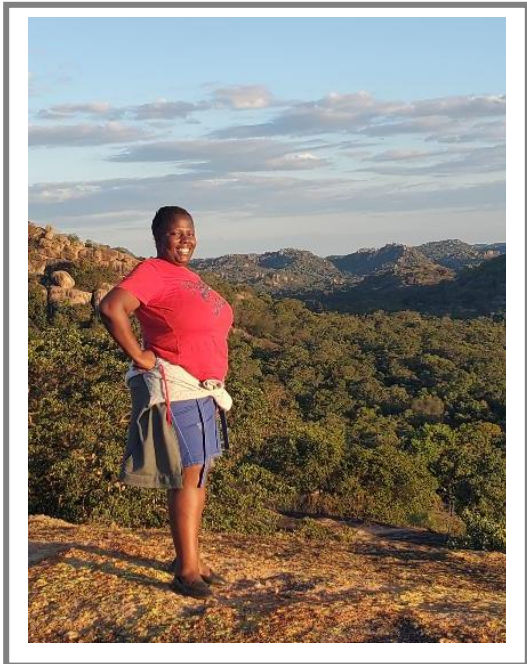
Victoria Falls take almost 8 hours when it used to take 3. After school, children stood on the side of the street with a shovel to keep trying to fill the holes to help oncoming passenger vehicles. Our driver, Patrick, did a tremendous job avoiding them!

3. **Stayed the same**...The joy and happiness of the communities: We visited 2 new communities outside of Victoria Falls that had been provided all of the supplies needed thanks to generous donations. The sewing classes taught them about sewing, the pattern used for to create the feminine pads, and tricks about the pads like how they can be folded small to fit in a pocket for when it's needed! We also visited other new communities to discuss why they wanted assistance from Sewpportive Friends, how many women would be helped, and what their plans were to sustain the sewing project if they were chosen as a village that would be approved. Both villages were accepted and already have sewing supplies and sewing groups! All of the women that we encountered were so fun, welcoming and loving to us and we all enjoyed each other until we can meet again.

4. **Changed**...Rhino Viewing: We often go on safari during our Zimbabwe trip to Hwange National Park. The Imvelo safari company has worked over the last few years to introduce rhino back to the park (Community Rhino Conservative Initiative) by working with the neighboring village of Ngamo (which Sewpportive Friends is now working with too!). The highly trained team keep the rhino safe from poachers. Rhino viewing fees have already funded a new local clinic for the surrounding communities. It was great to see this collaboration, growth, and the rhino!

Sewpportive Friends is thriving in Zimbabwe thanks to the funds that have been received and that have been passed on to these remote villages, changing their lives... and ours, just by knowing them. I can't wait to go back in 2024 and develop these relationships further and make many new ones.





Isabel Ndebele

Sewpportive Friends Team Leader - Zimbabwe

Julie met Isabel Ndebele in 2016 on the first Sewpportive Friends trip. She was a teacher at WhiteWaters Secondary School and was instrumental in opening the door for the Sewpportive Friends program at the school and in the local communities. Isabel volunteers as a Team Leader. She assists in purchasing and delivering of supplies in Zimbabwe, as well as teaching sewing classes throughout the year. We are grateful to have her as part of our team.

A message from Isabel:

A person can never understand what other people go through until one takes time to be with them and get to know who they are and what is happening in their everyday lives. Sewpportive Friends works hard to be in the communities and work with our fellow women. Here is then when one gets to understand the challenges other fellow women go through in their lives. A woman in Africa is the pillar of every family, and in most cases, their needs are not prioritized in the family. Girls and young women grow up being taught to sacrifice for their families, but the big question is, who sacrifices for them in the same family.

With the economic hardships in the communities, women work tirelessly to put food on the table, and buying sanitary wear becomes an unthinkable task especially for those with many girls in the family. This program aims to bring together women with their different challenges to come and share their everyday lives and problems with each other while sewing their reusable pads. The objective is to build a strong woman who will stand up for all challenges through pad making. They meet, learn and sew the reusable pads, which they can use and even sell to other communities. Again going there to meet others is not just

about sewing pads only, but the pads produced come with lessons on feminine hygiene and women's health.

Apart from the sewing, the program seeks to empower women in all the aspects of their lives, they get to gain a lot economically, socially and emotionally. Meeting with other fellow women, each of them becomes the strength for the other and they build one another. As it is said, the stronger the woman, the stronger the nation. Working as part of these women, I really want to appreciate all the women playing their different roles in assisting others. And not to forget, we have some men who have seen the value of a woman and vowed to assist in their different capacities. We really respect them for being with us in this program. They may not be sewing the pads, but their unwavering support has brought us this far. It is my hope that our programs grow and continue building more friends, Sewpportive Friends.



Zimbabwe Visit

July 2023

By Julie Phippen

In July, I had the pleasure of traveling with three wonderful ladies M'lue, Janet and Jane. M'Lue and I met in India, November 2022. There, she quickly learned how to sew the washable pads so she could assist me teaching sewing classes in Chaukori. After a week of challenges (with sewing machines) and also wonderful successes, she stated she would love to join me one day to Africa on a Sewpportive Friends trip. Well, July 2023, she signed up and was a tremendous help, as well as wonderful tentmate! I have a feeling this is not her only trip to Africa.

Janet, has been an amazing supporter and sewing contributor for Sewpportive Friends for a number of years now. Her interest in joining a group to Africa led her to teaching groups this past July. She is a professional at sewing and teaching! I am truly grateful for her helping hands. I hope she will join me again one day.

Jane was introduced to us by Janet. Our first time meeting was in the airport security line leaving for Zimbabwe. She stated she could not sew but she certainly was a quick learner and her assistance during the sewing classes was tremendous. She has made many new friends in Zimbabwe.

We had an amazing time! It was a productive and successful trip. They joined me at many of my meetings, as well as all of the sewing classes. Learning, listening and asking lots of questions. Their insight and intrigue brought new ideas.

Many thanks to these special friends for their support, generosity and compassion.



Zolani, South Africa August 2023

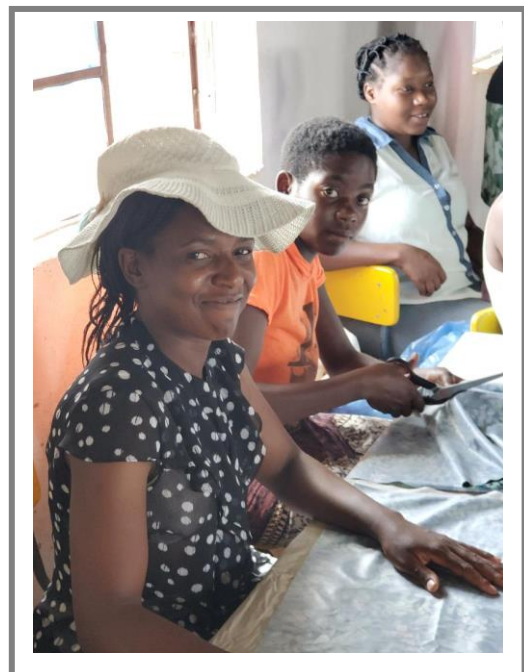
In August, we traveled to South Africa to meet a sewing group in Zolani. This beautiful community is about 2 hours from Cape Town. It is nestled in rich copper colored mountains. It reminded me of Utah, USA, but with an African charm. Isabel Lynch and Julian Mouers from SABBA Movement introduced us to the Zolani community that they were involved with. Sewpportive Friends had provided the Zolani sewing group with 20 sewing machines earlier in 2023 along with fabric and supplies.

I first met Isabel in 2017 in Zimbabwe. At that time, she was working with Imvelo Safari Lodge's charitable organization helping communities in the eastern Hwange National Park area. She and I became friends and had an instant sisterly connection. I truly appreciate her dedication in uplifting lives, her kindness to others and vision for change.

SABBA had worked with the Zolani locals to create a small business called the Khulani Sewing and Beading Group. We were excited to see their progress. The group was busy sewing the washable pads and other items for selling. They are amazing ladies sewing and knitting professional quality items. What a pleasure it was to get to know them. Mangi, the team leader, was motivating and inspiring!

We are excited to see the amazing work they continue to produce!

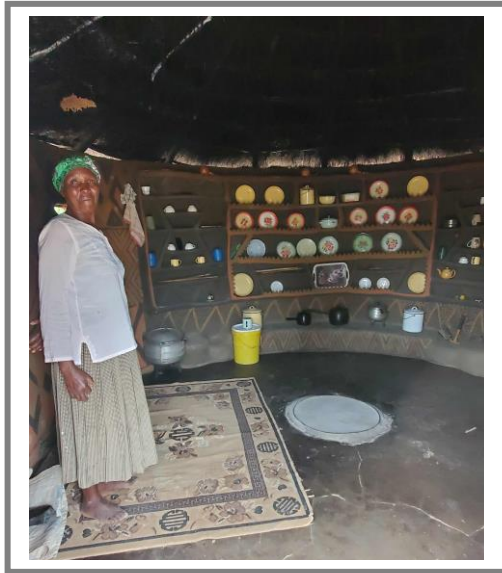
Many thanks to Isabel and Julian for their kindness, hospitality, and friendship. We had a wonderful time in Cape Town and Zolani. See you again soon.



A note from a friend...

Our friend Lorren, from Greenline Africa, Zimbabwe, wrote us a beautiful thank you letter for assisting Jembwe and Dibutibu communities. An excerpt from her letter, "Sewing of reusable female sanitary pads will indeed free women and girls from menstrual cycle poverty and insecurity where they worry month-to-month about how they will afford disposable pads. Also, the women groups will do other sewing activities that will help them generate their own income, positively impacting on their livelihoods and at the same time empowering women in economic decision making within their households."

Hope and empowerment changes lives.



Giving season

It is through the generosity and kindness of others that allows Sewpportive Friends to purchase the following items for sewing groups in Africa. *Current prices.*

Singer non-electric sewing machine	\$125
Electric sewing machine	\$170
Overlock sewing machine	\$250
Hemp fleece	\$18/meter
PUL fabric	\$9/meter
Snapping tool kits	\$30

We also provide thread, scissors, Velcro, table cloths, measuring tapes, patterns, underwear, pad kits and lots more.

**No gift is ever too small.
Every dollar makes a difference.**

**Donations may be made on the website
www.sewpportivefriends.org or by mail:
Sewpportive Friends
PO Box 5223, Beverly Farms, MA 01915**

Working together

Thank you to our friends who are dedicated to uplifting communities in Zimbabwe, South Africa and India, and for their assistance in overseeing the Sewpportive Friends sewing programs:

Isabel – Sewpportive Friends Team Leader, Zimbabwe
Pepsi – Community Development, Zimbabwe
Misheck – Umhambi Foundation, Zimbabwe
Delight – Community Development, Zimbabwe
Meredith – 528 Victoria Falls Guest Lodge, Zimbabwe
Dave, Sherdard, Tawanda, Edson – Big Cave Camp, Zimbabwe
Hannah, Vusa – Imvelo Safari Lodges, Zimbabwe
Dot, Sibussiwe – Community Development, Zimbabwe
Lorren, Charlene – GreenLine Africa, Zimbabwe
Isabel & Julian – SABBA Movement, South Africa
Kathy – Himalayan Naari, USA/India
Devbala – Himalayan Intercollege, India

**Thank you to all our supporters.
Your contributions have and
will continue to change lives.
Your gift provides HOPE.**

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

**A special thank you to
Kathy and Steve Taylor, Askari Safari.
(www.askarisafari.com)**

