



# Sewpportive Friends

A stitch of compassion goes a long way.

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*Join us in our journey, as we help women in Africa by providing them with handmade, reusable feminine products.*

## January

*A new year, time to reflect and to look ahead...*

January is a time to reflect on the all blessings in our lives: our family, good friends, love, health, home, new friends, community, support, employment, education, achievements, improvements, provisions of basic life necessities, there is so much to be grateful for.

It's also a time to look forward to a new year, a new chapter in our lives. We all have an important role while on this planet. The search to find our gift is part of our journey, and is the inspiration that leads us and allows us to live a life of kindness, compassion, happiness and peace, and do our part in making this world a better place. While we each walk our path to find our purpose, we should walk with an open heart, gratitude, strength and a smile.

*The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away."*

*~ Pablo Picasso*

Sewpportive Friends is part of my life story and continues to unfold. It is a gift of the heart of many loving individuals who have been connected through this mission. Whatever the

role, each and every amazing Sewpportive Friend is a beautiful and important part of this mission's purpose.

Thank you for joining us on this journey.

*Julie*



## NOVEMBER 2018 NEWS

The afternoon on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, our Sewpportive team of six: Gregg, Norma, Margie, Joyce, Brian and Julie, arrived in Victoria Falls. We had a warm welcome of 104 degrees Fahrenheit. Although a bit jet lagged after our 24-hour journey to southern Africa from the USA, the group was ready for the busy 10 days ahead.

Our first visit followed the next morning at Chisuma village. Pepsi Rice organized and accompanied us to her home village. The meeting started with Pepsi introducing us, followed by a beautiful prayer. Then she shared our mission



and purpose with the village leaders and women from this community. The leaders were very pleased we were there to help and granted us approval to help their community.

The day had cooled down a couple of degrees – just a couple of degrees. We moved to a classroom where the sewing fun started. All hands were on deck, Gregg and Brian were the photographers, while Joyce and Norma helped setup and kept supplies distributed as need. Margie was part of the sewing process in the USA so she and Julie took it one sewing step at a time with our Chisuma friends. Tracing, cutting, sewing, adding snaps and Velcro – each step was covered in the few hours in this beautiful village we were now part of. The women listened attentively, participated and helped each other. They learned quickly. We reminded them that practice makes perfect. They were all excited to have their new sewing group so they could practice, become more efficient, and produce high quality feminine pads.



These lovely women sang and danced at the end of our visit and shared their gratitude and enthusiasm to be successful with this project in their community.



We were off to visit our friends at Sianyanga on Monday. Mr. Ncube and Mr. Munsaka orchestrated a beautiful program for our group. Songs were performed by students, mothers, and the young ladies from the Saturday sewing group. Beautiful poems were recited, and we were entertained with a play the women acted out sharing the process and progress of their sewing group.

The sewing group was very pleased and appreciative of the delivery of fabric and sewing supplies, and the school staff and students were thrilled with the with school items our team and friends from the USA donated.



Sianyanga’s Saturday sewing group participants are learning how to use the non-electric sewing machines. The mothers are teaching the girls how to use these machines to improve their productivity. Both groups are busy working as a team to produce high quality feminine hygiene items.



The women had produced intricately woven baskets, so before saying goodbye to our Sianyanga family, we purchased as many baskets as we could carry. I’m not sure

who was more excited; them for selling their handcrafts or us for buying these beautiful artisan pieces! 🌸 🌸 🌸



Our final community visit was with our friends at White Waters High School on Saturday. We were thrilled and excited to see the number of students who came back to school on their day off to meet our group. The girls updated us on their pad production. They were doing amazing work! We delivered more needed sewing supplies and fabric. The students sang, danced, performed skits, and taught us new games. Many thanks to Isabel Ndebele for organizing the fun day at White Waters, and special thanks to Lin and Tawanda at Big Cave Lodge for keeping us connected to this community, providing transportation and their continued love and support.



All of these communities that we have met through our Sewpportive Friends mission have shared the many needs of their village families. One need is that families are unable to pay their child's school tuition which will result in the child dropping out of school. We have 35 children now whose school fees are being paid by friends of the Sewpportive Friends mission. If you are interested in helping with a child's educational fees, please drop us an email at

[sewpportivefriends@gmail.com](mailto:sewpportivefriends@gmail.com) and we will provide more information and connect you directly to a school leader. You will receive updates, photos and videos of your student. When our group travels to Zimbabwe, we are always open to bringing little gifts for your students as well.

*Sponsoring a child's education is a separate mission from Sewpportive Friends. We are thrilled to connect you with these communities and are happy to provide you a sponsoring family contact information so you may get their insight on the experience of helping a child.*



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## WORDS FROM OUR SEWPPORTIVE FRIENDS



*By Fifi Fistas Mancue, Zimbabwe*

It has been an exciting year in 2018 at Sianyang Sewpportive Friends. The group has been working tirelessly doing many things. The mothers produced more pads which were sold

and some were donated to the needy. The girls produced crafts and sold them also.

In November, Julie and the group brought more sewing supplies, more girls started the sewing classes. They've shown their commitment and passion towards their learning. This brought joy to the mothers who were helping during the classes.

It gives so much happiness to note that since Sewpportive Friends started working with our community, people from different families and backgrounds have been brought together to be a family that supports each other. During the sewing classes, the mothers and girls discuss social aspects of life and also share their life experiences. This has created an element of togetherness and a bond within the group.

So many wonderful things are yet to happen. It takes commitment, love and dedication for them to show up.

Special thanks to all Sewpportive Friends for your love is amazing. Let's stay unstoppable. Together, we will reach above the sky!

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**By Pepsi Rice, Zimbabwe**

The key outcome that this Sewpportive Friends project focuses on is transformation of the Chisuma community and sustainable change in the lives of the beneficiaries of the sewing project and families. I believe that by giving them training, the women will be able to, not only sustain themselves but also the learn the skill of sewing. These beneficiaries will be able to raise themselves, their families, and the community as a whole out of poverty as they will be able to sew the pads, which are expensive to get, especially us women from the rural areas and the girl child.

For now, as a non-profit project, we depend on your generosity from our Sewpportive Friends who provide us with all the equipment and materials to keep us going.

Thank u to each and everyone for the love and support you showed to our Chisuma Community to start this wonderful project. This is a dream come true for me.

Thank you, Taboka, Twalumba.

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**By Norma Wolff, South Dakota, USA**

Words cannot often express what happens in the heart but I am going to give it a try. I received an invite from Julie last year shortly after spending a weekend together meeting for the first time. I questioned if this was the right time or somewhere I felt I should go. Less than a week from the invite I committed to take the trip with her and shortly after we were on our way. My sense was to have no expectations and allow whatever needed to happen to take place, assisting Julie in carrying product and tagging along as a companion.

Julie made me feel like a teammate with her Sewpportive group from the very beginning of the trip. She shared her process of how her heart fell in love with the people and country of Zimbabwe and knew after researching and finding a desperate need with their lack for sustainable feminine products for the girls to continue their schooling. Julie has poured her heart into this mission and has been able to find and utilize high quality fabric with easy to follow instructions for assembly.

What I found on the trip were a people who were willing to meet us with open arms and hear Julie's heart to resource them and teach them how to produce this product for themselves. They were grateful, loving and community-minded to play their part in supplying what is needed for the young women in their schools and villages. The people take great pride in their culture and country despite what the conditions may appear to be. What a beautiful country and people to which one's heart easily attaches to. I kept hearing in my spirit "we need them more than they need us" after

experiencing their warm welcome and grateful hearts. I have made life long connections through Julie that have become more like family to me through the trips.

It has been a true blessing to have been able to join Julie not once but twice on this wonderful journey to Zimbabwe. Her passion and heart for the country and people is true calling that is so evident as she connects with and stands for those in need for the simple things of life. Her humble heart, and sacrifice, along with kind gestures bring love and hope to those she touches. Please consider serving with her in this beautiful organization to enrich the lives of young women in Zimbabwe.

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**By Margie Bower,  
Massachusetts, USA**

I put off foot surgery for years for fear of how it would affect my life by not being able to be active for six months, little did I know that my life would be changed in so many ways because I crossed paths with Julie Phippen of Sewpportive Friends at a church function. Julie gave a presentation to the Women's Guild about the Sewpportive Friends mission. After the presentation, all the

attendees helped with different stages of the production of the feminine pads. I took one of Julie's cards thinking that I would be able to help somehow. I was in a boot cast for 6 weeks and spending time inside at home, so I reached out to Julie to see if I could sew some pads and enlist some of my friends to help too. She happily sent me links to the patterns and information on the correct material to purchase and I was off and running. Julie attended a meeting that I held with my sewing friends to start us off on our sewing journey. It didn't take long for me to contact Julie and provide many pads and padlets that were sewn and the Velcro and snaps were applied by additional friends that wanted to help the cause. Then came my big question to Julie...Do you need help delivering these to Zimbabwe?

At this point, my foot was healing and getting stronger and Julie happened to be planning a trip in November. Without hesitation, I was in! Julie and I were to be "tent mates" and her cousin, Gregg Wolff, and his wife, Norma, were also going to join us. As the planning for the trip continued, our group got larger when Brian Shultz and Joyce DeSanctis decided to join the mission. Was I really going half way

around the world with 5 people that I don't know?? Yes, I joined to be part of the journey and it was unbelievable!

Our first visit to the village of Chisuma, set the pace of our next 9 days. It was an incredible day with amazing women! Our next meeting was at Sianyanga Primary School where we delivered much needed school and sewing supplies; and then at Whitewater High School where we spent a morning in song, dance and games with the students.



We also spent days on safari and nights enjoying dinner while laughing, crying or laughing until we cried with joy over the day's events. It is a physically and emotionally exhausting trip, but it gives purpose and warms your heart. Thanks to the November 2018 Zimbabwe group and especially to Julie for all of her planning and organization.

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## Regions/Communities/Organizations Sewpportive Friends has reached

Over the past month, we have been communicating with two new communities who had heard about our mission. With the assistance of our Sewpportive Friend, Fifi, who lives near the Sianyanga area, we will be able to get these communities sewing before our USA group arrives in July 2019. We are excited to meet the folks from Ndlovu and Filabusi.

1. Chisuma (2018 new sewing group)
2. Lupinyu (Rise N Shine Girls Club, 2017)
3. Victoria Falls (Jafuta Foundation, 2018)
4. Sianyanga (Sianyanga Primary School, 2016)
5. Ngamo (Hwange School Projects, 2017)
6. Silungudzi (WhiteWaters High School, 2016)
7. Harare (Precious Pearls Trust, 2017)
8. Livingston, Zambia (New Hope Waves, 2018)
9. Ndlovu (2019 new sewing group)
10. Filabusi (2019 new sewing group – Sibongile Sibanda)

**Thank you for your continued support.**