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November 2019



Dear Friends of Maru-a-Pula:

After 16 full and rewarding years as principal, I'll be leaving MaP at the end of June 2020. I will certainly miss the sheer joy and clear sense of purpose that working here at MaP provides, but I'm ready to undertake new adventures back in the States. I should also add that my 92-year-old mother Adele will be pleased to have me a bit closer!

But before I go, I'd like to share seven of the delights I've encountered at MaP and to make a final appeal for your generous support.

1. MaP Students: Full of earnest and amazing energy, respectful but willing to challenge the status quo. We welcome their growth from quiet deference to polite assertion, from asking "Why?" to "Why not?" Often sleep-deprived, driven and determined to make a difference, MaP students give me hope for the future of Botswana and the planet.

2. MaP Staff: Their commitment to our students is rock solid; they're willing to go the extra mile and to keep them challenged, safe, well-fed and happy. They're exceptionally loyal and skilled and our students hold them in high esteem. The feeling is mutual. MaP's kitchen ladies cheer on our students at basketball games with cries of "SORRY!" whenever any player falls on the court.

3. Campus Critters: A charming and intrepid family of banded mongooses roam the campus keeping cobras, mambas and pythons at bay. Feral cats ward off rodents but many are too well fed to bother. Hungry monkeys snatch snacks from the unwary. Our birds are loud and lovely. Millions of campus termites chew their way through every bit of wood and grass they can find. It's a busy place!

4. Marimba Tours: Is there any more joyful sound than a marimba band? Every two years I've driven one of the vans for our marimba band as it tours the USA. At one memorable concert in NYC our band inspired senior citizens to rise up from their wheelchairs and dance in the aisles. Kids in the audience can't sit still either and often end up circling theatres in long conga lines. What's not to like?

5. Service: MaP students have taken our school's mission to serve the nation of Botswana and made it their own. Each year I am inspired by the creative service initiatives of our students and staff as they partner with community leaders and commit to meeting a pressing need.

6. Visitors: Each year our students enjoy the talents and mentorship of students from Juilliard and Harvard. It's been hugely gratifying to see future dancers, actors, authors, engineers, educators and inventors share their sense of life's possibilities and purpose.

7. Orphans & Vulnerable Children (OVC): If you'll indulge me, I'd like to quote from one of Alexander McCall Smith's *No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency* novels:

"Everyone was now aware of the scheme [our OVC Scholarship Fund] that Mma Potokwani had cooked up with Mr. Taylor at Maru-a-Pula School to give orphans what amounted to the best education available in Botswana.

The children chosen for that scheme had done every bit as well as the pupils who came from backgrounds of comfort and privilege, and had gone on to train for jobs that would otherwise have been way beyond their wildest dreams. A child who had nothing, who had been passed from pillar to post among struggling relatives, or who had not even had such relatives and had been completely abandoned because there was no grandmother to shoulder the burden – something that went against every fibre of Botswana traditions – such a child might find himself or herself training as a scientist, a doctor or an agronomist. And in the audience at such a graduation would be sitting Mma Potokwani in pride of place, in a sense – even if she were not physically there."

It's wonderful to read such a fictional tribute. And it happens to be true!

We are now in our 15th year of offering scholarships to deserving orphans and vulnerable children. Since we began in 2005 with two students, we have seen 56 orphans graduate from MaP through the OVC Scholarship. They have gone on to pursue careers in medicine, engineering, programming, law, aviation and one OVC has established himself in an executive search firm! **Your generous gifts make these life-changing outcomes possible.**

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MaP is thriving as never before. Our academic achievements place us among the best schools in Africa. Our graduates are studying at prestigious universities around the world and returning to Botswana to serve their communities. We're in the midst of an international search for a new principal who will build on these accomplishments and will be grateful for your continued support.

Would you be kind enough to make an exceptionally generous donation to AFMAP in this, my final year?

With many thanks for your years of support,

**Andrew Taylor
Principal**

Donate online at www.afmap.org