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The Village News

www.bmiss.org News and Updates from Building Minds in South Sudan SUMMER 2022 VOL. 12

We are happy to say that after missing all of you for the past two years, we are looking forward to being with you at our Annual Celebration Dinner this June 26th. Please note that we are at a new venue due to the sad closing of Burgundy Basin. They did not survive the pandemic. We will celebrate at Glendoveers on 2328 Old Browncroft Road. (Please see the dinner reservation form below.) We have accomplished so much even during the pandemic because you were so generous throughout this time. We thank you so very much.

Building Minds in South Sudan Celebration Sunday, June 26, 2022 4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

Appreciation – Progress – Dinner – Silent Auction

Adults \$40, Children 12 and under \$15 Kindly RSVP by June 8

Please cut out the response form below and mail together with your check payable to
Building Minds in South Sudan, 175 Willowcrest Drive, Rochester, NY 14618

Name(s) _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Yes, I/We will attend. Number of adults (\$40 each) _____ Number of children (\$15 each) _____

No, I/We are unable to attend, but wish to donate \$ _____

Total Amount Enclosed \$ _____

In this Issue...

New website

We have a new website design. Check it out!

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BMISS and Nomadland

Learn about BMISS's connection to the Oscar-winning film.

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Celebrate with us!

Please join us at our Annual Celebration Dinner.

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COLLEGE BOUND

In 2016 and 2017, 105 students (32 girls, 73 boys) received certificates for completing grades 1-8 at Ajong Primary School. Ajong's principal joyously reports that 80% of those students have now graduated from high school!!

BMISS was so happy to hear this good news! In order to continue on to college, eleven of these graduates needed scholarship funding. Public universities cost up to \$234 per year depending on the degree being pursued. Michelle Chiantera, a BMISS board member, has stepped forward to pay tuition for the eleven students for this coming year. Please consider donating to help these students complete their college degrees.

(top photo, left to right) Aluel Majok Guot, Ajok Riak Yok, Yai Malek Thuou, Najur Paget Dau. Aliei Mabuch Mabior is in front row

(bottom photo, left to right) Nhunomachat Marial Deng on left and Awaar Majak Deng on right of Sebastian.

Build it and They Will Come

2012

240 students attend under the tree school in Mayen Abun

2021

Ajong Primary School
804 boys and girls (no kindergarten or first graders because of flooding)

Majok Keen School for Girls
732 girls (no kindergarten or first graders because of flooding)

Bill Cook High School
182 boys and girls

NOW...

1,718 students attend school in Mayen Abun

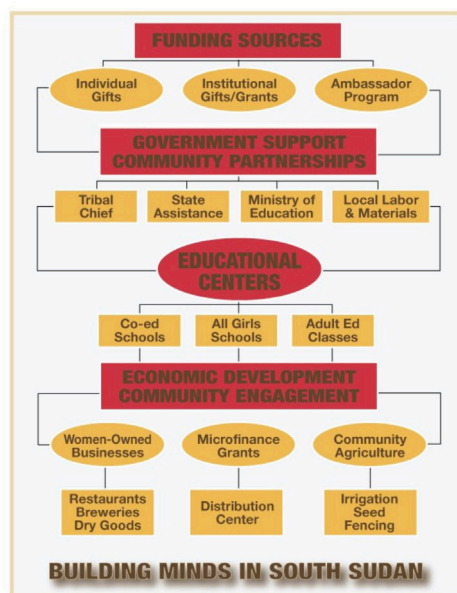
First Public All Girls High School!

The Laima and King Beck Girls High School will have SIX classrooms instead of the planned four. Each of these six classrooms has been donated by individual donors. Four classrooms are completed, and the foundation for two more has been laid. Latrines are being built. This first girls only public high school in South Sudan will have a grand opening celebration in January and classes will begin.



BMISS New Website Design! Check it out! www.bmiss.org

- Concept of Operations -



We are so grateful to Kyle Beck, a family friend of Sebastian's, who has volunteered his time and talent to creating a newly updated look and navigation for our website. Kyle has his BS in industrial Design from Wentworth Institute of Technology and his certificate of Design Strategy from the Austin Center for Design.



Thank you, Kyle!!

On the left is one of our new pages which explains in graphic detail BMISS' commitment to working with government and local people to accomplish our mutual goals. We are proud of our collaborative approach.

Oscar-Winning Film, 'Nomadland' and BMISS

Yes, there is a connection between Nomadland and BMISS. Charlene Swankie, a break-out star in the movie playing herself and often ad libbing, received a payday she really didn't desire. Swankie, as she is called, truly lives in her 2006 Chevy Express Cargo van. All she needs to be perfectly content is a forest to park her van, some tall trees for cover and a body of water for her kayak. Around the time that Swankie was compensated for her role in the film, she saw a post on Facebook from a high school friend, Bill Cook founder of the Bill Cook Foundation and devoted supporter of BMISS. Bill was reaching out to classmates for contributions prior to their 60th high school reunion and telling of his work in South Sudan. Bill was hoping to add a sixth and final classroom for the new all-girls high school being built by BMISS. Swankie messaged Bill and said that she'd send him \$10,000! Swankie told Bill in a follow-up phone conversation that she didn't need anything. She needed a new radiator for the van which didn't cost much. Swankie said, "The only thing (the film) gave me that I didn't have before was a sense of security, so if I do need new tires or a new battery, I have the capability without beg, borrow, or stealing." (taken from Democrat and Chronicle article by Gary Craig)



Bill Cook founder of Bill Cook Foundation



Swankie as herself



Chloe Zhao, Oscar winner for best director and Charlene Swankie at the Oscars

Looking Ahead

The next big project for BMISS is the **construction of a Pre-K through 3rd grade school**. It will provide a separate school for these younger students and free up rooms for the growing enrollment in Ajong Primary and Majok-Keen Girls' Schools.

An office is needed for two of our existing schools. It will be divided into three sections. One would be for teachers to meet and work, another section would be the principals' office and the remaining space would be for storage of teaching supplies.

We are still hoping to fund "the proverbial **pick-up truck**". It would provide safe and timely transport of a child who got sick or hurt at school, plus provide all ground transportation for Sebastian during his required annual visit to the village. The truck would be used by others for transporting supplies to the schools, businesses and even the gardens.