

OMNI scores lifeline highpoints

... as school churns out next leaders

ORPHAN Medical Network International (OMNI) founder and president Karen Throckmorton tells MARTIN NYIRENDA that education is simply the soul of a society and should be passed from one generation to another.

OMNI director Derrick Kalinda paraphrased views espoused by Ms Throckmorton during the recent graduation ceremony of 28 grade seven candidates and the first ever intake of 30 grade nine pupils that education reduces poverty, boosts economic growth and increases household income.

Ms Throckmorton, who is also co-president of the International Rotary Club of the United States — with her husband Mike Throckmorton — said they are working in company with the Ndola Rotary Club in constructing the Gender Based Violence (GBV) sanctuary for women and children victims to be accommodated at a structure currently on slab level. A water tank has been set up and immediate structures to support service provision.

Mr Kalinda contends that education can promote gender equality, reduce child marriage, and promote peace. In one sum, education is one of the most important investments a country can make in its people and its future.

The graduation was characterized by electrifying pomp and dance in celebration of achievements scored by graduates.

The event was graced by Rotarians from District 9210 Rotary Club of Ndola whose club has been instrumental in supporting development activities at the institution, including provision of learning materials for the library.

Mr Kalinda explored some achievements scored by the institution since it was set up in 2003.

He said that the institution has been recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education as an examination centre, which meant that the learning facility would be able to conduct examinations for grades seven and nine.

Mr Kalinda saluted the Rotary Club District 9210 family for its unwavering support to improve the quality of education offered at the facility, especially that this was benefiting vulnerable members of society who were offered free education.

"We have been enjoying good partnership with the Rotary Club over the years and we would like to thank

the club for all its generous support to OMNI, including the donation of the twin cub Toyota Hilux, reading materials and computers for our laboratory, among other items," he said, with a sense of appreciation.

The club has also supported construction projects of the Kitchen and ablution block at the learning facility.

He stressed that giant strides driven by OMNI partners — Rotary Club District 9210 — to ensure learners with education from less privileged families should not be in vain.

He advised parents to desist from marrying off their children, adding that early marriages should be fought from all fronts by Government, stakeholders and parents to ensure that learners succeed in acquiring skills through free education provided to them to become future leaders to steer the country to prosperity.

OMNI offers free education not only to communities in George Township but also to other surrounding areas. OMNI School manager Teddy Kasongo said learners were offered free hot meals during school days and this has encouraged more pupils to be interested in education.

"The school has 360 learners. With free meals provided to learners, more pupils were avoiding missing class as this was an incentive. One philosopher said the best investment was empowering children with education. Our motto is empowering children with education and we know that the country cannot develop without an educated society."

Mr Kasongo informed his audience during the ceremony.

He said education was the best equalizer as it breaks barriers of inequality, adding that parents should be encouraged to support the education of their children which was a priority.

Gracing the graduation event, Ndola Rotary Club of Ndola District



KALINDA



THROCKMORTON



MUNDALILA



KALENGA



KASONGO



NGOSA

9210 president Anthony Mundalila said his club has always been a partner in the construction and expansion of the community school since its inception.

"What we are witnessing is the harvest of hard work that has been put into this school by all stakeholders," reflected Mr Mundalila, flanked by Rotarian past president Paul Ngosa, president-elect Victor Kalenga and club secretary Sam Simutunda.

Mr Mundalila quickly recollected what the late South African President Nelson Mandela wrote in his biography — "Long Walk to Freedom": "Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that a daughter of a peasant can become a Doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the Head of the mine, that a child of a farm worker can become the President of a great nation."

He said that from Mandela's word of wisdom, society can see how education could provide the next generation with multiple pathways to succeed.

Indeed education is an equalizer, as Mr Kalinda stressed.

Mr Mundalila encouraged graduates and remaining pupils to work hard and prove Great Mandela's wisdom correct. He reminded his audience that he is a product of a student who went to school to learn while sitting on a log and using his lap as a table to write notes, yet today he is able to employ people through his construction firm.

The rest is history though the story is education is cardinal to change the face of the earth.

Mr Kalenga, the incoming Ndola Rotary Club of Ndola District 9210, is upbeat that the club will continue to improve lives of Zambians through empowering the future generation with skills to drive the prospects of society on a positive note.

To paraphrase Wole Soyinka's expression, what OMNI is achieving can be simplified in a few words: "Teach the pupil and he or she will not forget."

As the OMNI, a non-profit organization, is working to empower vulnerable children, the outfit is also effectively providing health care, and fostering community development.

It is promoting children's right to access health care and education in all areas of the world despite geographical circumstances.

"We first seek to provide

health care to vulnerable and orphaned children and their communities, secondly assisting in education and community development to provide hope for their future."

"We believe that our care must be aligned and respectful of indigenous cultures, and supportive of religious or national sensitivities," Ms Throckmorton goes on.

The Ministry of Health has already recognized the good deeds of the school through regular visits to the learning facilities by its officers.

OMNI's campus includes classroom buildings, a cafeteria, and administration building, a grinding mill, and a guard office and that the school is already certified by the Zambia Community Secretariat, and teachers are certified by the Colleges of Education, both of which are affiliated with the Ministry of Education.

Paul Ngosa, the past president of Rotary Club District 9210 expressed happiness that the school has continued growing since inception since 2005 when facility only had 20 pupils.

Now, the school bubbles with over 300 learners from less privileged communities. As a Rotarian, Mr Ngosa assured that his club will continue supporting educational activities taking place at OMNI learning facility.

The school has put in place a deliberate policy to complete child home profiles on each student on an annual basis, adding that school uniforms are provided to the students bi-annually.

Four bore holes have been installed to ensure clean drinking water even in the ugly face of cholera outbreak.

Of interest is the truism that the school has developed a strong bond with the communities such that when a learner has a bereavement, the school authorities mobilizes itself to offer financial assistance during the funeral by providing food for mourner and transport.

To entrench the chief advantage of access to education and health care to learners, the school offers evening adult literacy classes especially to mothers from surrounding communities so that the idea to inculcate the spirit of equipping learners with appropriate educational skills was enhanced.

Mr Kalinda tells this author that the literacy programme seeks to enable parents help their children respond

positively to educational needs, helping them answer homework.

This is the school plan to generate legacy among households for learners to be inspired to succeed in life.

"Children have no legacy in most cases which enhances

the project to rear of 200 layers has already started to improve the feeding programme at the facility.

Ms Throckmorton put it revolve around the ambitious vision to set up a training facility to operate parallel the school where trade courses

and other entrepreneurship programmes would be introduced to enable the local communities were equipped with skills to participate

in the overall development process of the country. "My love is to share what God has given me by giving back to communities and children of Zambia. Vulnerable children have no voice and through the school, we are trying to provide that voice so that the children can go into life successfully," she confessed.



Rabbecah Ngonga (left) being honoured for completing grade nine by Mr Mundalila, next to him is Mr kalinda