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Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

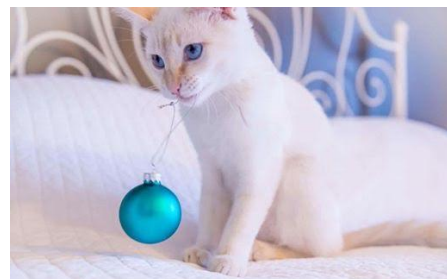
2017 has been heralded in by the most amazing rain throughout Botswana – so very welcomed by people and animals and very empty dams. The Delta is lush and the desert has come alive; the country has been transformed into a green paradise with dramatic cloud build up each afternoon, a magnificent backdrop for animal sightings!

The rain and holidays have brought inspiration to the Travel for Impact team and we look forward to the year ahead, developing and growing initiatives started in 2016; the community bus, the bed night bank, developments at the Nhabe Museum, Crafthood and primarily showcasing and supporting the amazing work that our partner organizations are doing.

Best wishes,

Ruth Stewart, Director of Travel for Impact

Month at a Glance



The Story of Moremi the Kitten



The Road to Shakawe



'The Boys Can Help Out Their Sisters'

Women



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Crafthood-unite.com

Crafthood

Crafthood is an independent initiative launched by Travel for Impact with seed funding from Southern African Regional Environmental Program (SAREP). Crafthood is a centralized marketing and sales platform for weavers in the District. The aim is to support weavers in establishing an independent livelihood, and in turn, support immediate needs within their household.

The Road to Shakawe

This weekend, the Travel for Impact team made the trek from Maun up to Shakawe. The team stopped in at Ngwao Boswa - Gumare, Ngamiland Basket Weavers Trust - Etsha, and Shakawe Craft Centre - Shakawe to deliver marketing materials and check in with the lovely ladies of Crafthood.

The Crafthood initiative, launched in partnership with SAREP, aims to increase the profile of weavers throughout northern Botswana and market the incredible potential of Botswana's craft market.

At each of the centres, individualized posters and other marketing materials were dropped off. These posters highlight the individual weavers working at the centres. As evident in the pictures, the ladies were delighted to see their faces represented and were excited to put them up around the centres.

If the rains are any indication, then 2017 will bring a very prosperous year. We look forward to profiling these incredibly talented weavers and bringing you their stories.



Women



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WoMen Against Rape (WAR)

WoMen Against Rape (WAR) was established in 1993 in response to a prevalence of gender-based violence in the district of Ngamiland. WAR is a crisis centre that deals with society's most vulnerable: women and children. WAR has been an active voice for over 20 years and is a leader in the fight against gender-based violence.



'The Boys Can Help Out Their Sisters'

Walking through the WAR office, I am directed to an office within the administration block. As I enter the door, I am warmly greeted by Ariane, Alana, and Eva – volunteers on the Student's Against Rape (SAR) project. For this project, the SAR team goes into schools on a weekly basis to open dialogues with the kids on issues related to adolescent sexual reproductive health and rights (ASRH&R), gender based violence, and help foster general life skills.



There are markers spread out on the table and paper is draped across chairs. "Right now, we're working on a new project called 'Keeping Girls in School,'" Ariane says. This initiative aims to provide sanitary pads to girls throughout Maun. "This is an issue that we've picked out," Alana states, "it keeps girls from maintaining regular attendance in schools."

To address this issue, the team has collected six boxes and aims to place them throughout Maun - giving the

community an opportunity to donate sanitary pads. However, it is up to the students in the SAR Clubs to lead this project. "We've tasked the boys with this initiative," Alana states. The boys will oversee decorating the boxes, coordinating with local grocery stores, and eventually retrieving donated pads. Not only does this process give students an opportunity to engage with the community and champion a project, but it also helps diminish the stigma surrounding sexual development. "This is a way that boys can help out their sisters," Ariane says.



"We're also very excited about the debate competition," Eva, chimes in. Last October, the SAR team hosted a drama competition at WAR and the results were beyond what they expected. The event had over 130 participants and all the schools prepared dramas complete with songs and dances. Due to the success of the previous event, anticipation is already building for the debate competition.

Right now, they have five schools signed up but anticipate seven.

In addition to these projects, the team is also preparing to host workshops in the Maun's five (5) customary kgotlas. These workshops aim to open up parent-child communication. "The idea is that we're paralleling what we speak about with the students and the parents of the students," Alana states, "they should be going home with the same messages and understandings." The half-day workshops will feature presentations from stakeholders throughout the community such as the police, healthcare workers, social workers, etc.



The SAR team have been keeping busy so far and if January is any indicator, they are going to have a very eventful and exciting year.

Culture & Heritage



Fast Fact:

Standing at only 30 cm (12 in.) tall, meerkats, also known as suricats, depend on group cooperation to survive in the Kalahari Desert. They live in groups of 20-50 extended family members in large underground tunnels.

These family groups, called gangs or mobs, are led by an alpha pair, with the female being the most dominant. Most of the group members are either children or siblings of the alpha pair.

The dominant couple (and subordinate pairs) will produce two to four pups a year. Other group members will babysit the pups, even feeding them milk. Because survival of the pups is vital to sustaining their social unit, meerkats have been known to risk their lives trying to protect the young.

Source



Polokong
an effort to assist Maun's destitute elderly

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AGLOW - Polokong

Despite tremendous efforts to provide social security to the country's most vulnerable populations, hindrances such as walking long distances, and some day-to-day activities present many challenges for the elderly. AGLOW-Polokong aims to change the lives of these individuals by making home visits, providing basic necessities, and giving loving attention.

The Elderly and a Transformed Maun

The elderly are not only a source of joy, but they are a piece of history. The village of Maun has transformed over the past several decades; it is the elderly that remind us of how things were and why it is important to remember our culture.



According to Statistics Botswana, in 2011, there were over 7,500 elderly people living throughout Ngamiland. This group is defined as 'economically inactive,' that is, they are a dependent group. Fortunately, the country of Botswana has a strong sense of community and the elderly can typically rely on relatives to support them. "They [the elderly] are taken care of by anybody who is a loving relative" says Lesang, a volunteer at AGLOW. However, many do not have the support system needed. "If they don't have that, then they are lonely in their houses." "Most of them have no children," she says, "their children have passed away or they have no children."

AGLOW – Polokong, which started several years ago, aims to address this issue and make a difference to the

disadvantaged elderly in Maun. Beyond that, they try to make the elderly "feel special and live the remainder of their years in dignity." AGLOW provides food and care for the elderly throughout Maun. This includes making house visits and spending time with them. When recalling one client, Lesang remarks that she particularly enjoys his company because he is always sharing stories. "He will tell me of stories about the chiefs and about how Maun was," she tells me.



Today, Maun is transforming at a rapid rate. For example, in 1966, during independence, there were only 96 cars in Maun. Furthermore, in 1981, the population was only 13,925 – a far cry from the estimated 55,000 in 2011. As things change, it becomes more and more important to remember the country's history and culture. The elderly give us insight into how things were. AGLOW plays a pivotal role in looking after the elderly; the legacy of Maun.

Source

Children



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Bana Ba Letsatsi

Bana Ba Letsatsi (BBL) is a rehabilitation centre that offers a place of safety and support for vulnerable children. The organization provides daily meals, clothes, transport, medical attention, and hygiene facilities, as well as counseling, skills training, and also reintroduces children to the structure of education. BBL has helped many children reintegrate and it continues to be a safe-haven for children throughout the community.



Storytime with a Coordinator

I feel like a good Auntie to them, not only a coordinator, but an Auntie; somebody they can look up to and who also looks up to them.

There was this one day with one of the small boys here – one of the chickens we have laid its egg so I went to pick it up and put it with the others.

But he said, “No, no, no! You can’t do that, when you do that, the chicken will get angry!” He went to the kitchen, got a spoon, and lifted the egg nicely and put it with the other eggs.

He taught me that you don’t touch the chicken’s egg with your hand because you will make it angry and it won’t incubate the egg. I got schooled. I’ve just learned so much from the kids.

- Taboka, Coordinator at BBL



Catching up with BBL

“It’s going to be a wonderful year for us at BBL,” states Bana Ba Letsatsi coordinator Taboka.

In a short interview with the coordinator, she started by reminiscing about when she started at the rehabilitation centre. “One thing that makes me happy is when I came in last year around this time, I was wondering ‘what am I doing here?’ I only had 6 or seven staff members and one volunteer,” she says, “It was hard. It was hectic.” However, things have since turned around; BBL has 14 or 15 staff members and they also have volunteers.

One of these new positions is the ‘Head of Programs,’ which is run by Nametsegang. “All the programs we run are interlinked,” she states. Beyond rehabilitation, BBL is also actively involved in several other community initiatives. Working with Amplify Change, the organization is leading a project, ‘Creating a Healthy and Empowered Youth Community,’ aims to empower youth to make smart decisions.

Loren, a Peace Corps volunteer working on the event, explains that they go into ten schools throughout Maun and have ‘girl empowerment meetings.’ They talk about self esteem, advocacy, sexual reproductive health, provide youth friendly services, and encourage communication.



In addition to this project, BBL is also involved in a human rights project in coordination with NCONGO. With the limited staff in the past, BBL’s impact was limited. “We would juggle through different roles which was very tough,” says Nametsegang, “It was difficult for programs to run smoothly.” Now, BBL has a Head of Programs position to ensure that each individual program runs smoothly in line with BBL’s overall mandate.

2017 already looks like a promising year. “It looks like we are on track already,” says Nametsegang. This is largely due to the support from the community. “I’m very thankful for the support we are getting from different people, especially your office,” she says, “transporting children to and from BBL, that’s a huge relief on our part.” Nametsegang is referring to the community bus which transports kids to and from BBL on a daily basis. To her donors, she states, “We are really thankful for all the support we get and we are hopeful that you continue to support us in all the ways that you can!”

Conservation



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Maun Animal Welfare Society (MAWS)

Founded in 1998, MAWS aim to protect Botswana's wildlife through domestic animal care. To accomplish this goal, MAWS offers free veterinary services to low-income villagers across Botswana. In addition, they also reunite and rehabilitate lost, found, and stray animals. MAWS is actively preventing the transmission of diseases from domestic animals to wildlife.



The Story of Moremi the Kitten (Written by Amanda Stronza)

In early October, my friends and I took a drive in Moremi. It was a gorgeous day, with few people in the reserve, but lots of activity, including a giant eagle owl with a chick in the nest and 13 cats--eight lionesses with five cubs. Returning to Maun that evening, we stopped at a restaurant outside of town. We chose a table in the corner, and discovered our 14th cat of the day—a tiny, white kitten with crystal blue eyes and coral pink ears, sitting politely, as if waiting for us. I couldn't resist picking him up, and he instantly started purring and repositioning himself in my arms to fall asleep. He stayed with us for the entire meal, soft and quiet in my lap.



As we began to leave, the waitress pulled me aside and asked me to please take the kitten. I said I couldn't, I love animals, but travel all the time. Besides, I said, he seems happy at the restaurant. She assured me he wasn't, and, in fact, was in danger of being dumped on the other side of the river. "The manager doesn't like him," she explained. "He already dumped his

mother last week." My heart sank. I thanked her for trying, but said, "I just can't." We left without the kitten.

Back in my hotel, I couldn't sleep. The kitten's fate and his potential encounter with a crocodile haunted me. At sunrise, I rushed back to the restaurant, found the waitress and asked her to help me find the kitten. She knew where to look, and when she called him with a tidbit, we could hear him purring under the deck even before he appeared—so tame and trusting. I thanked the waitress, in tears of relief, and paid for her help.

I had just one day to find a home for the kitten before I returned to the U.S. The hotel allowed me to keep him in my room, and that was the beginning of the end, in a good way.

I had planned to find a home for him through MAWS, but quickly realized I was already too attached. Years ago, I had lived in Maun with a cat who looked just like him. That cat had disappeared in the U.S., though I'd searched for her for months. This kitten seemed like a second chance.

I named him Moremi—for my favorite place in Botswana, for the lion cubs we'd seen that day, and for the power and cultural significance of the name.

I returned to the States for a month, entrusting dear friends, Sara and Sven

Bourquin, to care for him while I was gone. Tana Hutchings and the wonderful team at MAWS gave him the care he needed, including shots and sterilization. I'm so grateful to many people who cared for him! In my absence, he doubled in size, affection, and purr decibel.



After the long drive from Maun to Johannesburg, Moremi boarded his flights with Qatar Airways to travel 40+ hours through Doha to Dallas where he was finally greeted with all the love in the world. It's took him only a few days to become the favorite little brother in the house. His big sister, Matilda, shared her bed with him. And his big sister, Coraline, bossed him around for a bit, and then gave him some love and shared her toys.

He is all purrs and cuddles, and he sends his love to everyone in Botswana. He'd like everyone to know he recently saw his first Peregrine Falcon, from his own window in Austin!

Our Community

A Trip to Nhabe: Walking Through Maun's Historic Museum



“The museum is about the people,” says Joyce Malema, the Administrations Officer at the Nhabe Museum. Located a mere 5-minute walk from the airport, the Nhabe Museum has been open to the public since 1996. Although the museum is in a prime location and offers valuable insight into the country’s history, the museum was not developed as a tourist destination. In fact, the museum itself is free to visit (however, donations are appreciated). Instead, it was created to address the “needs of the community” by showcasing and highlight Botswana’s many tribes.



This is evident walking through the museum and seeing the diverse displays. Currently, the museum features traditional clothing, pottery, musical instruments, and weapons. Additionally, the museum also features art from local artists. However, the museum is always changing. “It’s not a set piece

museum,” says museum administration, “it is good to have a blend – to keep it flowing.” Throughout the year, the museum changes its displays to showcase different artists and installations.

Although the museum has been open for over 20 years, 2017 is already proving to be a particularly exciting year. The museum’s restaurant is expecting an exciting expansion. In addition to providing traditional Botswana food, the restaurant plans to include a variety of other options to suit any palate. The idea is it will be a big draw for people where they can eat and walk around the museum – exploring Maun’s creativity.



Additionally, the museum recently finished construction on the Art Studio and Auditorium. These spaces will give artists an opportunity to display and sell their work, collaborate, and build up Botswana’s growing art movement. However, the success of museum is due to the support of the community. The response has been positive and appreciative, says administration. In fact, most the items on display were given to the museum by donors throughout the country. Travel for Impact has been just one of the organizations proud to support this initiative. TFI have played a role in

sourcing funding, consultation, and helped bring ideas to life. Travel for Impact has played an “important role” says administration, “it can only get better.”

The museum asked to express gratitude to Travel for Impact’s travel partners and encourage donors to “keep supporting Travel for Impact and the museum.” Additionally, the museum is always accepting artifacts to display. If individuals have artifacts they would like to donate to the museum, please use the contact information below.



As a tourist hub, Maun is known globally for the beauty of the Delta, however, the museum gives people an opportunity to see beyond the Delta and learn about the rich history of the country’s people – to see a different aspect of Maun. It is about sharing history to both visitors and locals.

For more information or inquiries please contact the museum at: museum@btcmil.co.bw

Our Community

Desert & Delta Safaris Celebrates the Success of Khumaga Primary School

“This is a learning environment that I am proud of and you all need to be proud of,” says the General Manager of Desert & Delta Safaris (DDS), Bruce Petty, to the students of Khumaga Primary.

On January 23, 2017, DDS went to Khumaga Primary School to celebrate the high performance of the school and the top students. Khumaga Primary was #1 in the Boteti region with a 86% PSLE pass rate! At the event, top students and teachers were awarded trophies and treated to inspirational speeches.



Desert & Delta Select Scholarship Recipient

Starting the new year with a bang, DDS have once again selected a student to sponsor through their ‘Leaders for the Future’ scholarship program.

In a partnership with the Botswana Accountancy College (BAC), the program selects one recipient from the region and sponsors their education through either a Bachelor of Arts in Tourism Management or a Bachelor of Arts in International Management - both of which have a bridging course and 3 years of study after.



This year’s candidate, Segomotso Maria, is a 29-year-old who hails from Maun. Although she has worked as a Special Constable at the Botswana Police Service and in customer service, Segomotso has always been passionate about conservation and tourism; she saw this scholarship as an opportunity to learn about how to combat poaching and protect the environment. The DDS selection committee were impressed by this passion and selected her as the recipient.

During the press briefing, last year’s recipient, Neo Mothao was in attendance and gave advice to the Segomotso about what to expect the first year. Segomotso was really excited about receiving the



scholarship and was grateful to DDS for offering such an opportunity.

Bruce Petty the general manager of DDS said this scholarship offers the kind of skills that young Batswana need in their business. He also believes that the future of tourism lies in the hands of the youth because they can bring a different perspective to management and conservation issues.



DDS has found that education is a key element to help empower the youth of Botswana. The scholarship program falls into their mandate to help people within their region. It is no surprise that DDS has been shortlisted in the ‘People Award’ category in this year’s ‘Tourism for Tomorrow Awards’ hosted by the World Travel and Tourism Council.

We wish Segomotso the best of luck with her studies and look forward to watching her become one of the leaders of the future!

Our Travel Partners

Our travel partners are the cornerstone of TFI and without them and their extraordinary generosity, TFI would have just remained a dream. Our partners represent every aspect of travel to Botswana and each offer an unforgettable holiday in this breathtakingly beautiful part of the world.



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The bed bank encourages suppliers to donate bed nights to Safari Destinations, who in turn sell these bed nights on, passing the proceeds to Travel for Impact to support charities with their core costs. Both Travel for Impact and Safari Destinations would like to express their gratitude to the following companies for their generous support of the bed night bank:

