

SPEAKERS MINI-BIOS

REV LINDA LEVIN

Linda grew up in apartheid South Africa. Her first career was as a Latin, English and Remedial English teacher in South Africa and London, England. Ordained as a minister in the United Church of Canada in 1979, she served for two years in Northern Ontario and 29 years at Runnymede United, Toronto.

Linda retired in June 2011 to found Village of Love Canada, for which she has provided leadership over the last 11 years. She is in close communication with Andrew and Leonora Obara, the founders and administrators of Kijiji Cha Upendo (Village of Love), and has a comprehensive understanding of the whole project.

Linda does supply preaching and often in her sermons she includes stories from Village of Love. She also does presentations to women's and service groups.

SUE EASON

Sue Eason is a Social Worker who has worked extensively with women and children impacted by violence in their lives. In her role as manager in a Family Service agency, she ran a collaborative school/family/community-based violence prevention program and wrote many successful funding applications. As a Field Coordinator and instructor at Humber College she had a particular interest in the areas of community development, fundraising and agency administration. She has shared this knowledge while sitting on the Board of Directors of various non-profit organizations. Sue was one of the leaders of a church youth mission trip to Kenya, visiting the Obaras and various other projects in Kenya.

LAURA ROSSALL

Laura is a retired teacher who has taught in a number of settings including teaching kindergarten and training student teachers at Ryerson. She also taught urban studies and art with students from Kindergarten to Grade 10 at the School Visits Program at Harbourfront Centre.

A calling in 2018 led her to spend a month with women and children in Kibera, Kenya. She encouraged children ages 6-18 years to express their artistic imagination through art and movement. During that time she attended women's empowerment meetings with the adoptive mothers of these children. Connections with the women and children has continued during the past four years.

ROBYN SALTER

Robyn is a Social Worker with extensive experience in child and family health care. She joined the HIV/AIDS program when it began at Sick Kids in 1988 and retired in 2019. She specialized in psychosocial issues for children, youth and parents living with HIV/AIDS. Through this, she worked with many children orphaned by the AIDS deaths of their parents and saw the vulnerabilities of these children and youth. Robyn met Leonora Obara in 2004 at a conference on children, youth and families with HIV/AIDS. They connected through Leonora and Andrew's adoption of 10 children orphaned by AIDS, in addition to the 5 children born to them. Robyn introduced the Obaras to social activists at Runnymede United Church where they made strong relationships. She continues facilitating communication between the Obaras and Canadian supporters and donors. She visited the Obaras in Kenya in 2007 and 2019. Robyn was highly impressed with the benefits of family-based orphan care and how motivated the mothers are by the principles of the program- empowerment for themselves and their children.

BRENDA GIBSON

Brenda has over 40 years of experience in education, as a classroom teacher, school librarian and administrator working in both English and French Immersion schools. She has had extensive experience working with the resettlement and advocacy for refugees primarily from Africa in Montreal and Halifax and currently is chair of a refugee committee in Toronto.

She has recently visited the Village of Love project in Kibera, Kenya as well as some schools in the area. In meeting many of the women and children who have received microloans and educational supports from Village of Love, she was able to witness the impact that this project is having on increasing the women's ability to provide for their families and offer hope for a better future for their children.

CHRISTINE STENTON

Christine Stenton is an experienced Project Manager overseeing and leading several technology-focused initiatives that provide coaching and technical assistance to leverage leading-edge digital tools. She has a Master's in Political Economy with a specialization in African Studies. While living and working in Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique, and Kenya, she utilized her skills in capacity building, particularly in the areas of monitoring, evaluation, proposal writing and institutional sustainability.

Christine first traveled to Kenya on a Youth Trip while in high school. Her interests led her to develop a M.A. graduate thesis on informal settlement upgrading. This effort was given support by Kijiji Cha Upendo through volunteer translators and connections with academic supervision in Kenya. Later, through her work with the CAP Network she was

able to assist Kijiji Cha Upendo by training staff in the use of a project builder template and providing assistance with funding applications.