**J. KIRBY SIMON FOREIGN SERVICE TRUST**

***GRANTS AWARDED IN 2004***

The J. Kirby Simon Foreign Service Trust is a charitable fund established in the memory of Kirby Simon, a Foreign Service Officer who died in 1995 while serving in Taiwan. The Trust is committed to expanding the opportunities for community service, professional fulfillment and personal well-being of Foreign Service Officers and Specialists and their families. The Trust has been funded with contributions from Kirby Simon's colleagues, friends and relatives and other persons interested in the purposes of the Trust. The Trustees are present or former members of the Foreign Service - State Department community and Kirby Simon's parents.

In the Fall of 2003, following the pattern established in the seven previous years, the Trust invited proposals for the support, in 2004, of projects initiated and carried out by Foreign Service personnel or members of their families, or by other U.S. Government employees employed at American diplomatic posts abroad. In response to this invitation, the Trust received 53 proposals from 42 countries. The very modest size of the Trust permitted funding of only 35 of the proposals – and, in many cases, at less than the requested levels. The 35 grants range in amount from $500 to $4500, for a total of $78,520; they support projects conducted in 31 countries.

The following pages describe the projects awarded grants in 2004. (Material in quotation marks comes from the texts of the proposals received by the Trust.)

**Albania – Tirana:** Equipment, supplies and training services for a shelter for victims of human trafficking – a project administered by Amy L. Sebes, spouse of a Foreign Service Officer at the Embassy.

An estimated 6,000 girls and women in Albania are or have been modern-day slaves. The forced prostitution-and-labor market is highly organized and systematic: girls are promised either marriage or a job in western European countries, and are then sold to organized slave traders, smuggled out of the country, and forced into prostitution. In 2003, Ms. Sebes founded the Association of Albanian Girls and Women (AAGW) to assist recovering victims of human trafficking by giving them "not only the necessities to begin a new and better life but also the self-esteem and job skills to do so successfully." The women and girls are lodged at a government-provided shelter, but the vocational training, handicraft production and job placement programs are the responsibility of AAGW. (AAGW itself "is run, with assistance, by the victims themselves"; they elect officers and make decision by majority vote.) Funds from the Trust enable AAGW to purchase, with oversight from Ms. Sebes, a copy machine, kitchen furniture and handicraft supplies, and to compensate a trainer for the knitting machines.

**Armenia** – **Sevan Region:** Conversion of an unused hall in a refugee shelter into a social center and library – a project coordinated by Mark Fleming and Traver Gudie, Foreign Service Officers at the Embassy in Yerevan.

More than 200,000 ethnic Armenians, having fled neighboring Azerbiajan, live in refugee facilities in Armenia. These shelters are generally shabby. Up to thirty families may have to share a single toilet, and each family is squeezed into a single room. A local nongovernmental organization, Mission Armenia, has collaborated with a United Nations agency to refurbish some of these shelters, concentrating on the individual living spaces. Messrs. Fleming and Gudie and other Embassy volunteers are creating a community area in the Sevan region shelter, where residents can relax, read books, and use computers. Funds from the Trust are being used to purchase computers, books, a television set and some furniture. Embassy volunteers are cleaning, painting, and wiring the hall.

**Armenia** – **Yerevan:** Construction of a shelter/clinic for stray animals in the capital city of Armenia, organized by Christy Brown, Residential Security Coordinator at the Embassy and spouse of an Information Management Specialist at the Embassy.

"Approximately 10,000 homeless dogs and cats live on the street" in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, and "there is no animal shelter in the country….[The animals] are often injured or diseased….Packs of homeless dogs regularly frighten [the residents], and the animals contribute to the spread of disease in the city." A local animal protection organization, the Community Development Center, is establishing a shelter/clinic that will "collect homeless animals, vaccinate them, treat illnesses or injuries, spay or neuter them, and then attempt to place them with an adoptive family." The animals not adopted will be returned "to the street, safer, healthier and unable to reproduce." Embassy volunteers, Americans and Armenians, coordinated by Ms. Brown, are assisting in the construction and finishing work, "including roofing. hauling debris…, painting, tiling the floor, building kennels and other similar tasks." A Trust grant provides for building tools and supplies.

**Bangladesh – Dhaka:** A television/DVD player and educational DVDs for a school serving “street children” in a Dhaka slum area – a project coordinated by Michelle R. Jones, cultural attaché at the Embassy.

In the Notung Bazaar slum of Dhaka, a large number of children spend their days picking through garbage cans looking for food; they do not attend school, they face vast health risks, and they have no running water or electricity. Several years ago a school for these children, the ABC School, was started by employees of the Embassy in Dhaka and of the American International School/Dhaka (whose Elementary Principal, Dr. David Fussell, is chair of the ABC School). The ABC School currently serves 50 children, five days a week, through five levels of primary education. Children of Embassy employees who are fourth grade students at the American International School visit ABC School students regularly to help them with English and basic math skills. A grant from the Trust, administered by Ms. Jones, provides the school with a television/DVD monitor and player and a selection of educational DVDs, in order “to familiarize [the children] with the world outside of the ghetto” – “with different environments, both social and ecological, around the world.”

**Belarus – Minsk:** Improvement of dilapidated facilities at a high school in a low-income area of Minsk, coordinated by Aaron Davies, Benjamin Dille and Dimitriy Semenov of the Embassy staff.

Minsk High School #217 enrolls about 1,700 students. The neighborhood it serves includes residents of the local orphanage and people displaced by the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown. The sports facilities in the school lack the most rudimentary equipment, and the playing field is lumpy. Trust funds pay for leveling of the playing field and for soccer balls and basketballs, gymnastic bars, benches and nets for the soccer field, and rims and nets for the basketball court. Messrs. Daviet, Dille and Semenov and other Embassy volunteers are installing the equipment and also taking children from the orphanage to the facilities for a sports weekend.

**Bolivia – La Paz:** Obtaining birth certificates and government identification for recovering substance abusers – a project conducted by an Embassy volunteer group established by Clara Greenlee, spouse of the U.S. Ambassador.

Among Bolivia's vast poverty population, a threshold obstacle to employment, public education, marriage licenses and government benefits is the absence of proof of identity. Without money for fees or knowledge of procedures, large numbers of Bolivians cannot obtain birth certificates or *carnets de identidad* (identity cards). One group that needs these documents consists of recovering drug abusers, known as *cleferos*. This group is the special concern of HOPE (Helping Other People Excel), an organization comprising Embassy personnel and family members and led by Ms. Greenlee, which works in cooperation with the city government of La Paz. HOPE is now assisting 65 *cleferos* to obtain the necessary identification documents by paying the fees and helping the applicants to navigate the bureaucratic system. A Trust grant supports this activity. HOPE expects that other voluntary organizations in Bolivia will replicate this program.

**Bosnia & Herzegovina** – **Sarajevo:** A program of early diagnosis and prevention of disease for older women, organized by Michele Sumka, Assistant Community Liaison Officer at the Embassy and spouse of the Director of the U.S. AID Mission.

"Two specific casualties…of the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina...have been health education and universal medical care." This development was made clear to Ms. Sumka through her volunteer work with the Jewish Community Center in Sarajevo, where she gave informal English lessons to members of a discussion group of 50 women over 40 years old, comprising Muslims, Jews, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians. The group, called La Bohoreta, had neither the knowledge nor the resources to engage in preventive health measures relating to such diseases as cervical cancer and osteoporosis. With Trust support, Ms. Sumka is directing a diagnosis-prevention program for this group; the program provides Pap smear tests, bone density scans, osteoporosis medicines (Fosamax and Calcium) and health presentations. It is hoped that this approach will be adopted by the Cantonal Ministry of Health for replication elsewhere.

**Colombia – Bogotá:** Medicines for children in an orphanage – a project conducted by two Embassy employees and one Embassy family member: Jacqueline Keenan, Sandra Graves and Marcella Ribetti.

Hogar San Mauricio is a shelter in Bogotá for orphans and vulnerable youth. It also provides day-care for poor working parents and parenting classes for people on probation. Currently, 170 children live at the Hogar full-time, and 80 children attend the day-care program. The three Embassy volunteers, along with others from the Embassy, have undertaken many projects at the Hogar, including the building of a security wall around the orphanage (a project funded by the Trust in 2003) and the recruitment of doctors to provide free medical care to the San Mauricio children. One reason for medical assistance is that the orphanage “sits on a piece of land that abuts the Colombian Andes” and is subject to extreme weather variations that expose the children to sun and wind burns; the children play among animals and in the pasture and “suffer from allergies. lice and mosquito bites." Funds from the Trust allow the Hogar to purchase essential medicines for these and other maladies.

**Democratic Republic of the Congo** – **Kinshasa:** Support for Street Smarts, a school and group home for abandoned homeless children, managed by a group of Foreign Service Officers, Embassy employees and family members: James Fennell, Carole Manley, Jan Manley, Hugh Marcy, Karen Ogle, and Rebecca Ward.

"More than a decade of civil war has left the Democratic Republic of the Congo in economic and social ruin….Coupled with the AIDS epidemic, the impact on Congolese families has been overwhelming." In Kinshasa, homeless children – AIDS orphans and children cast out by families too poor to support them or rejected as sorcerers by stepparents – must fend for themselves on the rough streets. In 2003, several of the Embassy personnel listed above reached out to nearby street children (*shegue* in Lingala) and founded Street Smarts. They arranged for schooling, rented lodgings for a group home and hired a house father, a cook, and a part-time security guard. Currently, the Embassy volunteers are involved in financial management, staff supervision, fundraising and monitoring the school and food operations. A Trust grant provides general support.

**El Salvador** – **Costa del Sol:** Construction of a security fence around a children’s home, supervised by Jessica Moore, spouse of a Drug Enforcement Administration agent at the Embassy.

The Hogar de los Niños is a rural orphanage 30 minutes from San Salvador, established in the late 1980’s by the Salvation Army and with the capacity to house 25 children. Ms. Moore and her family have been volunteering at the orphanage since later 2002. In December 2003, three men broke into the Hogar compound to commit robbery and murdered one of the children’s caretakers. The traumatized children were moved first to Ms. Moore's home, then returned back, for safety reasons, to a single building (one of three) on the Hogar grounds – a building that accommodates only nine children. In order to "utilize the entire Hogar facility" and thus house more children, to eliminate the current cost of a security guard and, most important, to provide the children with "a sense of security" – and security in fact – Ms. Moore has arranged with the orphanage to build a security fence around the perimeter of the orphanage. Ms. Moore is overseeing the work of the construction contractor, and the Trust provides the funding.

**Ghana** – **Goka:** Construction of living quarters for teachers at Goka Secondary Technical School, overseen by Matthew Weingast, Peace Corps volunteer.

Despite the enthusiasm of its 150 students, Goka Secondary Technical School suffers from a teaching shortage. During biology and social studies periods, for example, the students sit in the classroom unattended; these are among several subjects for which there is no teacher. A major cause of the shortage is that Goka is a barely accessible rural town with no running water or electricity, and with undesirable living arrangements for teachers. The Trust's grant provides materials for the construction of three modest, on-campus family houses. The headmaster and school leaders strongly believe that these accommodations will encourage teachers to accept assignments in Goka. Mr. Weingast, who currently teaches Chemistry and Core Science at the school, serves as treasurer for this project and monitors the construction activities.

**Greece – Athens:** Rehabilitation of a daycare center for refugee and other disadvantaged children, organized by Ambassador Thomas and Mrs. Bonnie Miller.

“As the first stop illegal immigrants and asylum seekers often make on their way to Europe from Turkey and countries of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, including Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, Greece has experienced a surge in refugees but is ill equipped at present to deal with them." The Multi-Cultural Day Care Center, founded in 1998, seeks to meet a modest part of the need. It serves 100 refugee and low-income Greek children by providing shelter, meals and instruction in English and Greek. The Center receives voluntary assistance of many kinds from the Community Service Network (CSN), an organization of Embassy and other volunteers organized by Ambassador and Mrs. Miller. (CSN projects have received two previous grants from the Trust.) The current CSN project addresses the disrepair of the Multi-Cultural Day Care Center – in particular, the bathroom. U.S. Navy Seabees at the Embassy, who are specialists in construction and plumbing, are supervising the renovation of the bathroom, and the Embassy’s Regional Medical Officer, a former painter, oversees the painting and tiling. Materials are being purchased with Trust funds.

**Guatemala – Guatemala City**: Equipment and materials for a library serving a before-and-after-school program, coordinated by Mary Jo Amani, spouse of a Foreign Service Officer.

Project Camino Seguro serves over 325 children, ages 4-16, whose parents – some of the poorest in Guatemala – work in Guatemala City’s garbage dump. The Project – with volunteer support from several Embassy families – provides a wide range of activities for children both before and after school, including dental and personal hygiene assistance, reading for pleasure, homework help and vocational training. Last year, a Trust grant provided books and cassettes for a rotating classroom library program. This year, with the opening of a new school building and library, the Trust grant supports the purchase of a computer, copy machine, paper cutter, and other library materials. Ms. Amani, Project Camino Seguro's "de facto volunteer librarian," is overseeing the selection, purchase and use of these items and training teachers in the effective use of library facilities.

**Guatemala – Guatemala City:** A pilot program to identify, diagnose and treat four common sexually transmitted diseases prevalent among poor women – a project supervised by Sue H. Patterson, retired Foreign Service Officer.

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are "ignored as a health care issue in Guatemala," despite preliminary evidence of widespread incidence. "Currently, rates of prevalence of STDs in Guatemala are not tracked, nor is there any coordinated effort to educate the public about risks and prevention of STDs." (One of the risks is greater susceptibility to HIV infection.) The pilot program, funded by the Trust, is intended to obtain accurate information about incidence and also to provide Guatemalan women with diagnosis and treatment of, and information about, STDs. Pap smear testing – and follow-up treatment – are being administered to 2000 women under the auspices of the Women's International Network for Guatemalan Solution (WINGS), a nonprofit organization founded and currently directed (on a voluntary basis) by Ms. Patterson. The diseases that are the subject of testing are Chlamydia, Candida (yeast infection), Trichomonas and Gonorrhea. Findings from this project will be disseminated to health care providers and educational institutions.

**Honduras** – **Tegucigalpa:** Improvement of the plumbing system of Hogar Diamante, a home for boys who have been living on the street, coordinated by Kassie Ashcraft, spouse of the Area Commander for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Elizabeth Black, spouse of a U.S. Navy Commander at the Embassy.

Hogar Diamante is a living facility for boys aged 6-16 who are homeless; 65 boys are now in residence. Besides offering food and a place to sleep, Hogar Diamante provides structured activities, including chores, study and vocational training. (The two crafts currently being taught are woodworking and baking.) The building itself is in severe need of repair. With Trust funds and under the supervision of Ms. Ashcraft and Ms. Black, Hogar Diamante is installing new toilets and showers and fixing a major leak in the roof of the school and dormitory.

**Kosovo – Dobrusha Village:** School supplies, sports gear, and a teachers’ break room for an elementary school, coordinated by Brett Jones, Refugee Coordinator of the U.S. Office Pristina.

In this ethnically-mixed community of western Kosovo, children who are Bosnian, Kosovar Albanian, and Roma attend the same elementary school. Forty-five percent of students here are girls, a statistic that is considered exceptional, given that many parents in this region send only their boys to school. Despite the fact that the school is a good model of ethnic interaction, teachers here lack some fundamental educational and social necessities. The Trust’s grant provides maps, globes, geometry supplies, soccer and basketballs, ping-pong equipment, and tables and chairs for a staff room. Volunteers from the Political Section of the U.S. Office Pristina, led by Ms. Jones, are purchasing and transporting the equipment and setting it up.

**Kosovo – Pristina:** “Improving the learning environment” at a preschool in the poorest section of Pristina – a project supervised by Brett Jones, Refugee Coordinator of the U.S. Office Pristina.

The Asim Vokshi Preschool serves 120 Kosovar Albanian children who, because of a space shortage, attend the preschool in shifts. A decline in the presence of nongovernmental organizations in Kosovo has reduced the opportunities for schools to receive financial support. This preschool lacks even the basics: furniture, toys, and teaching supplies. The one school room is dirty, with "a ratty carpet and peeling paint" – not a "welcoming…learning environment." The Trust’s grant enables volunteers from the Political Section of the U.S. Office Pristina to purchase and install art supplies, furniture, musical instruments and toys, and to obtain painting and carpeting supplies. These same volunteers, organized by Ms. Jones, are painting the school under supervision of a contractor.

**Kyrgyzstan – Bishkek:** A computer and furniture for a “family type orphanage” – a project organized by four Embassy staff members: Sal Amodeo, Lynn Bitters, Tamara Burkovskaya, and David Fox.

In the capital city of Kyrgyzstan, the standard of living is quite low, the economy is flagging, and the state cannot support even the neediest of citizens. A local resident, Nadezhda Kolosova, decided to help orphaned children by adopting them and taking them into her home. On her own, however, Ms. Kolosova could barely afford to feed the children and keep them warm. In 1996, employees from the Embassy began helping Ms. Kolosova and the children by doing some plumbing and electrical work, installing floors, and bringing a monthly carload of food. The Kolosova house, however, lacked a computer and basic furniture, such as beds, wardrobes, and desks. Funding from the Trust provides for the acquisition of these items, which will be purchased and delivered by the four Embassy persons mentioned above, who also volunteer at the Kolosova home.

**Lithuania – Vilnius:** An excursion to the capital city, Vilnius, for children from a group home in Alytus together with Embassy families – a project organized by Lt. Colonel John McDonough, Chief of the Office of Defense Cooperation at the Embassy, and Irena Volkovaite, Post Language Teacher at the Embassy.

The Alytus Children’s Home is one of the largest residential centers for children in Lithuania. It provides for the physical well-being of children aged four through 18 "who have been taken away from parents who are chronic alcoholics, convicts or simply neglectful." What the children need are more emotional growth opportunities. Last year, Embassy personnel, with funds from the Trust, arranged for an excursion to the capital city that enabled the young people to socialize with American Embassy children and to see sights otherwise beyond their horizons. This year, with support from a Trust grant, Col. MacIntosh and Ms. Volkovaite are arranging for another Vilnius excursion for about 50 Children's Home youngsters plus many Embassy family members. The itinerary consists of group tours at the Lithuanian National Museum, followed by a stop at Gediminas Castle (site of a Lithuanian children's legend), lunch at McDonald’s, bowling, and an ice cream social.

**Lithuania – Vilnius:** Sewing machines for a vocational training program for victims of human trafficking, conducted by Ann Severns, General Services Officer at the Embassy.

The Missing Person’s Family Support Center was established by Ona Gustiene, the mother of a victim, as a place of shelter to support people healing from the trauma of human trafficking. Because the Center has very few resources, the women have had to find jobs almost as soon as they arrive, "simply to help keep the Center afloat…" However, "forcing these women out into the workplace before they are emotionally ready may traumatize them further….[T]he only possible chance to get these women the time they need is to make the Center at least partly financially self-sufficient." To this end, Ms. Severns is establishing a sewing shop to produce clothing items for sale in the local market and, at the same time, to enable the women to learn a trade and "feel productive, helping to strengthen their…self-esteem." Ms. Severns is also the volunteer sewing instructor. The Trust is funding the purchase of five sewing machines, a cutting table and materials.

**Madagascar – Antananarivo:** Medical equipment for the treatment of mothers and children at risk for mal-nourishment, at a clinic founded by Dr. Sandra Bagley, Medical Officer at the Embassy.

In 2002, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Antananarivo began a supplemental nutrition program for single mothers whose children were at least two standard deviations below normal weight. The program gives food to the nursing mothers. In order to insure that the women get maximum benefit from the food being provided, in 2003 Dr. Bagley began a medical clinic that evaluates and treats the mothers and children for underlying medical conditions, such as “failure to thrive, parasites, worms, malaria and pneumonia.” While food for the program is provided by U.S. Government grants, funds from the Trust are being used to purchase medical equipment for the clinic.

**Maritius – Curepipe:** Hardware for a new information technology training center, organized by four staff members at the Embassy in Port Louis: Gerard L’Eveillé, Linley Meslier, Daniel Norman, and Lizzie Slater.

In an effort to "eliminate pockets of poverty" in the high-density area of Curepipe – poverty resulting from unsuccessful primary and secondary education – the Saint Marc Community Information Technology Project has been launched: an after-school and Sunday program run by the Saint Marc Community Center. The purpose of the center is to impart computer skills to local, underprivileged young people, ages 8-20. Because the island of Mauritius is "mov[ing] towards becoming the technology epicenter of Africa," training poor youths in computer fields is expected to increase their employability. The four Embassy volunteers are developing the Information Technology Project (with Mr. L’Eveillé as coordinator); they have obtained computers and other equipment from the Embassy. The Trust's grant will help the Project to acquire outstanding items: printers, a multimedia/teacher computer, scanners and a projector.

**México** – **Mérida:** A pilot program to issue birth certificates for 50 poor residents of Yucatán state, initiated by Maurice Glorioso, Robert Hollister and John Lewandowski, Foreign Service Officers at the Consulate in Mérida,

Without birth certificates, Mexican citizens cannot enroll in school, apply for a job, or open a bank account. Nor can they vote. In rural areas, parents cannot always afford the five to ten-dollar fee to register their children’s births, let alone the cost of traveling to the nearest civil registry. About five million Mexicans, consequently, are thought to be without birth records. In support of this pilot program, the Trust’s grant pays stipends for Registro Civil officials to travel to two neighborhoods in Yucatán state to complete birth certificate application forms for about 50 children. In addition to making the arrangements for these visits, the three Foreign Service Officers are traveling with the Mexican officials to provide “financial and logistical” support for their efforts.

**Mongolia – Ulaanbaatar:** Support for the operation of the Sukhbaatar Children’s Care Center, overseen by Mila Layne, spouse of a Foreign Service Officer at the Embassy.

The Sukhbaatar Children’s Care Center operates a soup kitchen and a school for 25 “children in difficult circumstances.” The Center also helps their families, who go for days without food and, in the winter (Ulaabaatar is the “the coldest capital in the world”), also lack wood to warm their *gers* (felt tents) or wooden huts. The Center's assistance takes several forms: purchasing *gers* for families without them, birthday celebrations, clothing distribution, medical aid for a burn victim, a prescription for an arthritis sufferer, a prosthetic limb, and health and emotional support for a teenage mother. Ms. Layne runs the Center with the help of a small paid staff and volunteers from Canada, Australia, Finland and the U.S. The Trust’s grant provides general support for the Center.

**Morocco – Rabat:** Medical equipment for a neonatal center serving low-income families – a project initiated by Kevin MacIntosh and Catherine Lincoln, Community Liason Officers at the Embassy.

The National Center for Neonatology is one of only two centers in Morocco – and the principal one – with capacity to care for premature or critically ill infants. Founded in 1979 by Professor Naima Bouazzaoui (and with a staff that volunteers in its spare time to make material fixtures and fittings for the Center), the Center offers care to newborns from low-income families who cannot afford private clinics. The Center, for example, charges U.S.$10 for 24 hours on an incubator, compared to U.S.$720 at a private clinic. The Center’s primary need right now is to upgrade its old and degraded "life saving equipment." Ms. Lincoln and Mr. MacIntosh are working with the Center to obtain this medical equipment The most urgently item is an intensive phototherapy machine, which is being purchased with a Trust grant.

**Peru – Carachacra:** Books, videos and furniture for a new library in a rural village – a project managed by Iliana Shoobridge, Foreign Service Officer at the Embassy in Lima.

In 1997, with volunteer help from the Foreign Service Officers and Foreign Service Nationals in the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the Embassy, the town of Cocachacra established its first library. The library was well-used, and townspeople helped support it by selling greeting cards to buy furniture. This activity encouraged a nearby town two kilometers away, Carachacra, to open its own library. The libraries are educationally indispensable in these communities; "Peruvian public schools do not provide books for students…[and] the parents…are too poor to buy books." For this reason, teachers regularly base their lesson plans on the library materials. Sixty-five children visit one or the other library each day, but they have few chairs or tables at which to study. PAS volunteers have been helping to provide books but more are needed. Funds from the Trust are being used to purchase books, videos, chairs, and tables for the new library in Carachacra, under Ms. Shoobridge's supervision.

**South Africa – Soweto:** Ten sewing machines for students in the Ithuteng Trust “youth empowerment program” – a project conducted by the Hearts and Hands Committee of the Embassy in Pretoria and coordinated by Tara Visani and her spouse, Maurizio Visani, Information Systems Officer at the Embassy.

The Ithuteng Trust is an award-winning Saturday school program for at-risk youth in the township of Soweto, which provides peer tutoring and counseling and has resulted in a 100 percent high school equivalency pass rate for the past three years. Ithuteng students engage in various educational projects – such as building a “cultural village” representing many South African ethnic groups on the school campus – while also receiving employment training and personal guidance and, if necessary, medical care, shelter, and food. Thirteen volunteer members of the Hearts and Hands Committee of the Embassy, along with volunteers from other countries, assist the Trust in various ways. One new project, a sewing program overseen by Tara and Maurizio Visani, provides the students with training in a valuable trade and produces low priced school uniforms – required in all local schools – for disadvantaged families of Soweto. The Trust is funding the purchase of the sewing machines.

**South Africa – Bronkhorstspruit:** Playground equipment for an orphanage in Gauteng Province – a project undertaken by the Hearts and Hands Committee of the Embassy and coordinated by Michelle Karolak, outreach contractor for U.S. AID at the Embassy.

The AIDS crisis has left many South African children without parents. When the Sisters of St. John the Baptist congregation began working with AIDS patients, they found that these patients were deeply “worried…about the fate of their children after their death.” In 1998, the Sisters opened a shelter in Bronkhorstspruit, a town in Gauteng Province, which now houses 23 children: AIDS orphans as well as abused and abandoned children. Hearts and Hands volunteers – especially Ms. Karolak and four other Embassy family members, Debby Harrison, Linda Lockwood, Melissa Neweiser and Tara Visani – work closely with the orphanage. Because the orphanage is not near other settlements and the children spend most of their free time on its grounds, the orphanage is their only playing site. Accordingly, the volunteers are providing two pieces of all-ages playground equipment for the orphanage: Treasure Island and Full House Greystoke. The Trust provides the funds for this equipment.

**Turkey – Adana:** Informal baseball games for American children at the Incirlik Air Base and Turkish children from a nearby school, coordinated by Tuba Bada, Translator and Public Affairs Assistant, and Deborah Hart, Foreign Service Officer, at the Consulate in Adana.

Many American children are resident at the Incirlik Air Base, which is presently supporting operations in Iraq. In order to promote friendship and inter-cultural understanding among American and Turkish children, Ms. Bada and Ms. Hart have arranged for the use of a field at a private school in Adana so that students from the school and American children from the base can play baseball together and Turkish children can practice their English. Other consular staff members and U.S. military personnel are participating as coaches and referees. The Trust funds the purchase of baseball equipment.

**Uruguay – Ciudadde la Costa:** Physical renovations to a child care center serving two squatters’ villages – a project overseen by David J. Savastuk, Foreign Service Officer at the Embassy in Montevideo, and G. Renee Savastuk, his spouse.

Since 2001, the *Los Alfareros* child care center has served 150 children from 75 families living as squatters in a pair of make-shift housing sites. Largely headed by unemployed adults and single-parents, these families are plagued by crime, violence and other ills. The child care center, headed by four psychologists, uses creative arts and other activities to "create a stimulating and loving environment for these children," but the center's building and grounds have serious deficiencies. Among the physical needs: a separate room for older children aged 9-13, bathroom renovation, ceiling repair, and irrigation for the children’s vegetable garden. A Trust grant provides for these improvements, carried out under the supervision of Renee and David Savastuk.

**Venezuela – Caracas:** Braille equipment and education aids for the only public school in Caracas for visually impaired children – a project coordinated by a committee of Embassy personnel and family members: Carol Gurwell, Lesley Kash, Mingehen Keller, Aida Marte, Suzanne Mastrorilli, Irma Rodriguez, Laura White and Linda Wright.

In 2003, volunteers from the Embassy in Caracas formed the Helping Hands committee to assist local organizations working with at-risk populations. Having already served six other organizations in the area, the committee decided to help Mevorah Florentin, a school serving about 80 visually impaired students. The school lacks enough desk slates with Braille writing frames for every child – basic tools that enable children to write in Braille. The school also needs more arithmetic and algebra frames, standard styluses, and folding canes. With Trust funds, the Helping Hands committee members listed above are purchasing the supplies; these members and other Embassy volunteers are learning how to use the Braille equipment and assisting the students to learn Braille.

**Zambia – Lusaka:** An upgraded kitchen for the Kondwa Day Centre for Orphans – a project managed by Nelda Villines, Office Management Specialist at the Embassy, and her spouse, Mwana Bermudes.

The Kondwa Day Centre was founded by a psychosocial counselor who, while volunteering at a home health care program tending mainly to HIV/AIDS patients, realized that the deaths of these patients often left behind orphaned children or children with one parent unable to provide care. Many of these children were undernourished, and some were HIV-positive or had developed AIDS. The Centre tends to more than 60 of these children, providing pre-school classes, meals, medical service, and encouragement. For older children, the Centre facilitates access to public education and placements into residential orphanages. The Centre also promotes HIV/AIDS awareness in the community and promotes income-generating activities for guardians and widows. The Centre's kitchen needs a new sink, an extra window, ceramic tiling, a ceiling and paint. The Trust's grant finances this work, to be administered and overseen by Ms. Villines and Mr. Bermudes, who initiated another Trust-funded project last year at a Lusaka orphanage.

**Zimbabwe – Mufakose:** Raw materials for an income-generation venture for families affected by the AIDS pandemic, co-supervised by Kizito Muodzi, Foreign Service National at the Embassy.

The AIDS epidemic in Zimbabwe has created a surge in poor children who are orphaned or have no parent able to care for them. In response, a group of volunteers in Harare, with Mr. Muodzi as co-leader, formed a child-care program that encompasses 30 children from five families in the high-density suburb of Mufakose, west of Harare. Each of these families has a grandparent or some other adult who has agreed to care for the children but who has insufficient income. One of the program’s goals is to help these adults to support themselves and the children in their care. The volunteers have started an income-generation program involving the production of vegetable oils and peanut butter, to be sold in the local market. Trust funds provide start-up materials, including sunflower seeds for oil pressing and ground nuts for peanut butter production, as well as other supplies and machine maintenance.

**Zimbabwe – Waterfalls:** Equipment for a palliative care facility for terminally ill AIDS patients – a project organized by three staff members at the Embassy in Harare: Shannon Johnson, Foreign Service Officer, Amanda Neve, Community Liaison Officer, and Georganne Ranzino, Office Management Specialist.

In Zimbabwe, where one in three adults is HIV positive, the Mashambanzou Care Trust (MCT) takes a holistic approach to caring for AIDS patients and their families – an approach that includes providing “shelter, medication, education and spiritual counseling.” The MCT's Drop-in Center maintains a Palliative Care Unit in Waterfalls, with 22 beds and a multi-purpose building with a chapel. The Unit "serves the very poorest of HIV-AIDS patients, providing them with a comfortable place to prepare emotionally and spiritually for death." With a grant from the Trust, and the supervision of Ms. Johnson, Ms. Neve and Ms. Ranzino, the Palliative Care Unit is acquiring two urgently needed pieces of equipment: a washing machine and a freezer.