

MEDIA ALERT:

Founder of the School of St Jude visiting Hobart

Gemma Sisia, the Australian founder of the highly successful School of St Jude in Tanzania, is visiting Tasmania and is available to speak to media representatives.

Gemma will be available from 12.15pm to 12.45pm outside the Restaurant Tasman at the Hotel Grand Chancellor in Davey Street Hobart, where she is scheduled to address the Rotary Club of Hobart at 1pm.

Information on the school and Gemma Sisia will follow.

For further information, please contact the President of the Rotary Club of Hobart, Tony Reidy – phone 0419 361 915.

The School of St Jude

Fighting Poverty Through Education



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BRICKS AND MORTAR FOR TANZANIAN STUDENTS

Gemma Sisia, the founder and Director of The School of St Jude in Arusha, Tanzania, is currently touring her home-land encouraging Australians to support the school's expansion by funding 'good old fashioned bricks and mortar' ensuring the desperately needed expansion of the school. For as little as \$100 Aussies can sponsor a square metre of construction in East Africa.

In 2002 Gemma started the school with only three students and one teacher. Today, the school educates over 1300 students from the poorest of families in Arusha and surrounding areas.

Currently St Jude's educates up to Form 2, the equivalent of year eight in Australian secondary schools. The construction of new buildings will accommodate student growth so that in 2014 the original class will graduate from, what will then be a fully functioning secondary campus.

"We have to get bigger! This year we enrolled an extra 194 new students which meant building classrooms and boarding houses to accommodate them – we need to start the buildings for next year's new students," said Gemma.

Although bricks and mortar do not necessarily translate into a good education, the buildings ensure we can provide the students of St Jude's with a well-rounded and comprehensive education in a safe environment which will hopefully encourage them to become the future leaders of Tanzania," added Gemma.

In only eight years Gemma and her team of dedicated local Tanzanian teachers and international volunteers from around the world have put together a curriculum which is rivaling even the most expensive of private schools in the country. Students from The School of St Jude's have already proven that, despite coming from an extremely poor background they can achieve great things. In the 2009 Tanzania National Exams, only the second year taking part, St Jude's moved up in the rankings to be placed 21st from over 15,000 schools.

On this tour of Australia Gemma is urging Australians to support the school's 2010 Student Appeal, raising funds to help build 25 much needed classrooms, a library and four more boarding-houses.

In 2007 Gemma was recognized for her work with St Jude's by being honoured with an Order of Australia medal.

For further information regarding The School of St Jude or to make a donation to the 2010 Student Appeal visit www.schoolofstjude.co.tz

Gemma will be visiting:

The Rotary Club of Hobart
Restaurant Tasman, Hotel Grand Chancellor,
Davey Street, Hobart on **Thurs 22 April from 12.45 to 2.00pm**

Gemma Sisia

Gemma Sisia spent her early years on a fine wool sheep property just outside Guyra in northern New South Wales, Australia. She is the only daughter with 4 older and 3 younger brothers. After completing her secondary studies at St Vincent's College in Sydney, Gemma decided to pursue a Science Degree (majoring in Genetics and Biochemistry) at Melbourne University and then an Honours Program (where she was awarded First Class) in the Northern Territory.

After completing a Diploma of Education she fulfilled a long held desire to help the poor in Africa, and travelled to Uganda to work for three years as a volunteer. This experience led to her passionate belief that free yet high quality education should be the right of all children in the world as education is the strongest weapon in the fight against poverty, corruption and political instability.

On her return to Australia, Gemma decided that this was the sort of work she wanted to pursue and so started a small group effort to help educate the poor in East Africa. A gift of a small plot of land in Arusha, Tanzania, from her father-in-law allowed her to realise her dream. In 2002 **The School of St Jude** opened with only a handful of sponsored children. With hard work and determination, the school has exploded to over 1300 children (on three campuses) all of whom are given a free education through sponsorship from individuals, families, clubs and schools from around Australia and abroad. The school also gives employment to over 350 local Tanzanian staff including 3 sets of local Headmasters and their academic teams who now run each school.

Even though **The School of St Jude** is very young, its academic results have already proven to be excellent with all the students in the examination year, being placed in the top 10% of Tanzania in the 2008 Tanzanian National Examinations. Then in 2009, only the 2nd time that the school participated in the National exams, St Jude's moved up in the National rankings to number 21 out of over 15,000 nationwide.

Gemma is married with three children – Nathaniel (8), Jacob (6) and Isabella (18 months). Her autobiography, *St Jude's*, was published in Australia by Pan Macmillian and remained on the Best Sellers List for over two months after it was released in 2007. Gemma's story has been featured twice in the high rating ABC TV documentary program *Australian Story*. In 2007 Gemma's achievements were honoured by an Order of Australia medal.

The School of St Jude is a non-profit organisation enjoying continuing success only because of our dedicated and generous supporters and the hard working team on the ground. Monetary contributions to St Jude's are tax deductible in Australia, UK and the US. Guided by the school's philosophy of *Fighting Poverty through Education* Gemma Sisia is determined that St Jude's will continue to grow and maintain the high standard of academic achievement it currently enjoys.

For more info please visit our website www.schoolofstjude.co.tz