

# Kazuri Jewellery: The Grandmother Connection

## Final Report: 2015



### **All Good Things Must Come to an End**

After nine years in business, Kazuri Jewellery: The Grandmother Connection (KJGC) closed its doors as of December 31, 2015. Founded in 2007 as a fundraising project by friends Peggy Edwards and Margaret Thompson, KJGC went on to raise \$794,187 over the years for the Stephen Lewis Foundation's (SLF) Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. When Margaret and her husband Larry retired in 2010, Gay Coates and Mary Jane Sterne became Peggy's new partners.

The decision to end the business was difficult but inevitable. We experienced a decline in sales by 20% per year over the last few years. Many of our volunteer hosts wrote to say that the market was becoming "saturated" in their area. There were other factors influencing our decision including complications related to the technology needed in retail sales now (cheques and cash are becoming obsolete), rising costs of shipping and duties, and the personal costs to we three volunteer partners in terms of time and money. There are many hours involved in running a business this size and we carried a large personal line of credit that enabled us to front all the costs.

We have been asked if the 300 women at the Kazuri 2000 factory in Nairobi will suffer as a result of our decision, and we are happy to report that they have a robust operation and will continue to thrive without us. They now sell 50% of their jewellery within Africa and export the remainder to distributors in the US, the UK, the Netherlands and Australia. Nonetheless, we will miss the close relationship which we developed over the years with the staff of Kazuri 2000.

### **Thank You, Thank You**

The KJGC initiative has been an amazing journey, which would never have happened without the support and efforts of so many volunteers and grandmother groups in the Ottawa/Gatineau Region and all across the country. Over 150 groups from coast to coast to coast hosted parties and other events to sell our jewellery. Most groups hosted Kazuri sales over a number of seasons and years, and a few extraordinary hosts sold Kazuri over the full nine years of operation.

The creativity and energy that went into all of the events was inspiring. In addition, our dedicated volunteers cheerfully unpacked, sorted, counted and bagged hundreds of thousands of pieces of jewellery shipped from the Kazuri 2000 over the years. All these volunteer hours allowed us to sell the jewellery at almost one third of the price of other retailers around the world, and to donate 100% of our profits to the SLF.



Special thanks is due to the Unitarian GoGos in Ottawa who were ongoing sponsors of our business, providing a large room in their church for our

annual "sorts". We also want to thank the SLF staff who not only purchased and modelled our jewellery, but also promoted it to new grandmother groups.

What we will miss most in closing our business is the interaction with our hosts and volunteers across the country. We have established lifelong friendships that we cherish. We realize that this is also a sad occasion for many of our volunteers: selling Kazuri was often a community building exercise, and lots of fun. We had no idea when we started that KGJC would become such a catalyst for fundraising, communication and relationship-building across the grandmother movement. We thank you all from the bottom of our hearts.

Our last thank you is for Lori Blinn, our Operations Manager who became the soul of our operation. Lori loved working with we women "of a certain age" and her creativity (she and Gay designed many pieces over the years) and hard work were the backbone of KGJC.

**In solidarity and friendship,**

**Peggy Edwards**, Managing partner, member of One World Grannies

**Gay Coates**, Managing partner, member of Oomama

**Mary Jane Sterne**, Managing partner, member of One World Grannies



Gay Coates presenting final KGJC cheque to Ilana Lewis and SLF Staff.