

## Turnbull School gives back to Africa – Zumba style

Kristy Wallace, Ottawa This Week

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Turnbull School is inviting the community to come out with their dancing shoes on Jan. 23 to support an Ottawa-based charity that helps mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS in Lesotho.

With about 150 people expected to sign up for the Zumba class at about \$30 a person, Turnbull School is gearing up to donate thousands to the country that has so little.

"It's very simple in the sense that a small amount of money goes a long way," said Mary Ann Turnbull, director of the Fisher Avenue private school. "The money goes directly to the people."

The small Southern African country of Lesotho is one of the world's poorest countries with the third highest rate of HIV/AIDS in the world, according to Help Lesotho – the local charity that the Zumba class will raise money for. Between 25 to 60 per cent of children in the country of approximately two million people are orphans, according to the Help Lesotho website.

Shannon Kaya, a mother of two students at Turnbull School, brought the idea of holding a Zumba dancing class to Turnbull as a way to raise money for Lesotho.

"Zumba is a really fun, easy to follow dance exercise program and you basically repeat a number of steps that are easy with a good beat," said Turnbull. "You don't even realize you're working out."

Kaya is a Zumba instructor and said it's a great way to raise money.

"It's a lot of fun," she said. "When people come out to Zumba they always have a good time."

Turnbull added that students in the senior classes will also be on hand at the event to sell Pearls for Girls – pearl bracelets that will be sold with all proceeds going to help in leadership camp for girls in Lesotho.

For the past six years, Turnbull School has been involved with the charity and Turnbull said she wanted her students to learn more about global issues.

Students are also involved with charities like the United Way and the Ottawa Hospital.

"I think it's important for children to be good citizens of the community and the world," said Turnbull. "It teaches them compassion, which is trying to be able to put yourself in the place of other people and be truly empathetic. To really understand what people are going through, you can reach out. And we have a group of students who later will be leaders in society."

Kaya said her five-year-old son and seven-year-old daughter who attend the school already know more about Lesotho than she does.

"The school instills values of caring, kindness and excellence," she said.

Kaya added that when the king of Lesotho came to visit the school last year, her son was really excited.

"It was such a wonderful experience," said Kaya. "My little guy shook his hand, and it was a wonderful connection to this little country in Africa."

Anyone interested in attending the event on Jan. 23 can email [zumba@live.ca](mailto:zumba@live.ca) for more information. Tickets are \$25 in advance or \$30 at the door and 100 per cent of the proceeds will be going to Help Lesotho. Door prizes have also been donated by local businesses.

Kaya encourages people to come out and try Zumba – there will be about seven instructors on hand to teach the dance. Doors open at 1:30 p.m.

"For people interested in trying it, it's a great way to start," said Kaya.