



Partly cloudy 34°
5 Day Forecast



WayneSuburban.com

NEWS SEARCH go
Advanced search

[News](#) [Classifieds](#) [Directory](#) [Today's Ads](#) [Jobs](#) [PhillyCarSearch](#) [AllAroundPhillyHomes](#)

Thursday 01 March, 2007 | [Home](#) > [News](#) > [News](#) > [Reader of the Week](#)

- News**
- Top Stories
- Community Calendar
- Editorial
- [Reader of the Week](#)
- Sports
- Education
- Weather
- Email us
- RSS feeds
- Most Read Stories
- Contact Us**
- Classifieds**
- Photo Galleries**
- How to Place a Print Ad**
- Place Classified Ads Online**
- Subscriptions**
- Business Directory**
- Other Publications**
- Personals**
- Fun and Games**
- Personal Finance**
- Lifestyles**
- Marketplace**

Reader of the Week Marie-Odile Savarit

By Jen Levy and Adam Bloom 03/01/2007

[Email to a friend](#) [Post a Comment](#) [Printer-friendly](#)

[Advertisement](#)

When Marie-Odile Savarit's 16-year-old daughter, Julie-Anne, and her two Radnor High School classmates, Hillary Bridges and Christian Mark, told her they wanted to improve education for African children, she was a little skeptical. "When you have three high-school sophomores telling you they want to start an organization to help African children, how would you feel?" asked the Wayne resident. "I told them they would have my support, but after the first container of school books was sent, I questioned whether that would be it."

Savarit never imagined that in only five years, this non-governmental organization would send over 13,000 books and numerous computers to the African country of Zambia. Through donations and fund-raising, the organization has also established a youth center so that Zambian children have a safe place to call their own.

"The reason for the poor condition of African education is that these countries simply do not have the money. Fund-raising is key to improving not only education but quality of life in Zambia," Savarit said.

Savarit, as the treasurer of the African Education Program (AEP), must be in touch with contacts in Zambia nearly every day to ensure that the money is being spent properly.

"It's pretty much a full-time job," said Savarit, who was also a professor at Villanova University for 17 years and now tutors French.

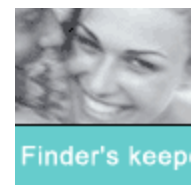
In addition to soliciting money from Radnor residents, Savarit depends on local businesspeople for financial support. Even during her interview with Suburban reporters, Savarit was interrupted by a phone call from Walter Buckley, a businessman, who said he "fell in love with the project."

Savarit herself fell in love with the project much earlier when she visited Kafue, the village in Africa to which the supplies are donated. "When you see the children it is not an option anymore. You just have to help them," she said.

Although Savarit's visit to Kafue a few years ago was initially to see the educational and social impact of the books and computers, after talking to the residents, she realized there was so much more she could do to help. "The children had the supplies, but now they needed a place," Savarit said.

So AEP rented a building and opened the Amos Center, a youth center with a computer lab and homework-help center. It is also a place to teach awareness programs about HIV and AIDS. Not only children can use the center, but women whose husbands have died from the HIV/AIDS epidemic can also get support there. Savarit became particularly interested in helping orphan children during her last visit to Kafue. She was heartbroken to learn that after eighth grade, students in Zambia must pay to go to school. So she decided to set up a fund to send orphans to the next level of education. Savarit's daughter, Julie-Anne Savarit-Cosenza, spent January in Kafue interviewing orphans to distribute 25 scholarships.

But the purpose of the organization is not just "to throw money at the Zambian people, like some charities," Savarit said.



She hopes that the organization will help make the people of Kafue financially independent and successful. AEP plans to establish an Internet café to help provide a resource for residents to find jobs and for recreation.

Radnor Township School District has offered a lot of support to the program. The township recently donated 50 computers and used textbooks to the effort. In fact, the three students who started the program, Cosenza, Mark, and Bridges, were inspired to start AEP after watching a movie about the quality of African education in a Radnor High School English class.

Radnor Township elementary schools have served as hosts for AEP's book drives. Last year, Wayne Elementary School collected textbooks for the organization, and this year Ithan Elementary held a book drive on Martin Luther King Day.

Charities in Swaziland and Kenya have contacted Savarit's organization about implementing similar programs in other African countries. "But we just want to focus on finishing the job in Kafue first. We can't help the whole continent of Africa. We want to make a difference one village at a time," Savarit said.

©The Suburban and Wayne Times 2007

 [Email to a friend](#)  [Post a Comment](#)  [Printer-friendly](#)  [Top](#)

Questions or comments? Email the [Webmaster](#).

Copyright © 1995 - 2007 [Townnews.com](#) All Rights Reserved.

[News](#) [Classifieds](#) [Directory](#) [Today's Ads](#) [Jobs](#) [PhillyCarSearch](#) [AllAroundPhillyHomes](#)
