



SPEAKERS4AFRICA

News Release

August 2006

Many of our supporters have been asking for the latest information and updates on Speakers4Africa (S4A), so the following is a summary of the latest news from me (Carole Spiers) and S4A founder Clive Wilson.

For anyone who isn't already aware of its activities, Speakers4Africa is an initiative to raise much needed funds for African charities. It was launched at the Professional Speakers Association National Convention in Brighton, UK, in October 2005, and is endorsed by Desmond Tutu, whose words of support, along with those of leaders from the professional speaking profession around the world are captured at www.speakers4africa.org.

How S4A works in practice

You can find details and FAQs at the Speakers4Africa website, but in simple terms the way S4A works is that a client wishing to book a speaker can ask them whether they are happy to speak as part of the S4A initiative. If they agree, the client will pay their expenses as usual but will pay their fee direct to an agreed African charity. With an estimated 10,000 professional speakers associated with institutions around the world, this is a huge fund-raising resource.

The hard part of the S4A initiative is making clients aware. We believe this will happen once the charities realise the potential funds this channel can provide. In the meantime, speakers themselves are a great way of making connections.

One way of doing this is to use S4A as an option where the client cannot afford the speaker's usual fee, but the speaker cannot compromise their fee rate – as doing so is regarded by many speakers as unprofessional and "the thin end of the wedge". Clive Wilson, the founder of S4A, has provided two examples where these situations have led to funds being raised for the Open Arms Infant Home in Malawi.

Donations as alternatives to fees

"My first experience of an 'S4A solution to limited budget' was in 2005 when a school asked me to speak on leadership and career development with their



sixth form boys,” explains Clive. “They had heard about my ‘Designed for life’ keynote and wanted a version for the boys as they prepared to make their university choices. I said I'd love to speak with the boys at such a critical time in their lives (who wouldn't). When it came to the fee rate, I gave my usual quote and could sense the embarrassment at the other end of the phone line. I informed the client that I wouldn't compromise the fee rate but would be happy to waive the fee completely if they would make a donation as close to it as they could to the Open Arms Infant Home in Malawi. They were delighted, they got their speaker, there was no haggling and they were proud to have contributed to a worthy cause. (And, incidentally, their donation was over three times the budget they originally had for the job, so this was great win-win for us all.)

“The second instance is more recent. The British Council were seeking a speaker on Leadership for a conference in Ghana. They asked the Institute of Leadership and Management for a recommendation. I had spoken for ILM twice in the recent months and on each occasion I'd mentioned my passion for Africa. ILM recommended me for the British Council work. Once again the African connection couldn't afford the international speaking fee and again I refused to compromise. Instead I agreed to waive the fee if they'd make a significant donation to Open Arms. Again the client was delighted. The end result is that I'm now doing a tour of four events in Africa over one week. I'm not taking a fee but the client is paying the equivalent of one international speaking fee to Open Arms for the four events. They're also paying all my expenses and those of a colleague who will travel with me in support, they've agreed to produce a DVD of the main conference, and are looking into the possibility of getting National TV coverage (for them - and for me). Other conversations with the British Council are suggesting that this will be the start of a relationship that will be exciting and worthwhile to all parties.

“So you see, being prepared to step out and ‘speak for those without a voice’, as Carole Spiers is often reminding me, can be hugely worthwhile for all involved. The funds raised from the above two case studies alone will keep two young children whose parents have died of AIDS in an environment of love and safety for about a year. Who wouldn't speak for a few hours to achieve that?”

Many other ways to help

Clive's case studies provide a great example of the benefits that involvement with S4A can bring, but there are also many other ways of getting involved. I myself went to South Africa in April and revisited some of the township communities that I have been working with over the past two years. I took with me a computer that I donated to one of the ladies in the township, Rosie



Companie, and this picture shows her expression of delight and tears of joy when she received this. She could not believe what was in her very hands. It was not a new computer but to her it was a new lease of life. To feel such joy and appreciation gets right to the inner soul. While we were there for a few days, she had already walked around the township with her new 'baby' in her arms and had asked her neighbour to give her lessons.



A donation by Nigel Canin (www.2simple.com), a colleague and friend of mine bought another computer for Cornelious Yellow, a wire sculptor, and as you can see the picture and video tell a thousand words. Yellow is able to use the computer for developing his business, and his children use it for their ongoing schooling together with other children in the township. While I was there I was able to give Yellow his first computer lessons and listen to the video to hear him voice his words of thanks and gratitude at receiving his computer.

Yellow has become a main focus and role model for the community, and the Dreamcatcher Foundation (www.dreamcatcher.co.za) with which I am working in South Africa have been the cornerstone of Yellow's growth from residing in a shack to a small township home – taking him from dependence to independence



As part of the Dreamcatcher team, I have staged empowerment workshops in the townships, bringing transferable skills to communities who have now raised their game and gained independence. From this course, for example,



Yellow has created his own marketing literature and double-sided business card, and is actively promoting his products to the local community outside of the township.

These wonderful stories are building an S4A community of warmth, love, generosity, caring and involvement, so please do join us in picking up the baton and running with it.

Call me or Clive and say 'Yes, I have a client who will donate to S4A'.

As Nelson Mandela said in the moving words of his inauguration speech:

'We have triumphed in the effort to implant hope in the millions of our people. We enter into a covenant, that we shall build a society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity. A rainbow nation, at peace with itself and the world'

We believe that Nelson Mandela's sentiments for South Africa are appropriate for the whole of Africa. The part professional speakers can play in all of this may seem relatively small but for the people whose lives we touch, our involvement can be transformational.

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August 2006

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