

Let's Get Down to Some Monkey Business

This is a story about a monkey and what he represents. A story that I hope we can build on each year at the *Weaving in the Sunshine State* basket retreat.

In 2018, Cathy Schneider and Teresa Yoder donated this monkey to our Silent Auction (along with a cash donation). While he is quite the handsome fellow, he also has a compelling story and is a world traveler.

Meet "Thando" our monkey whose name means "love" in native IsiZulu. He was born in the rolling green hills of the Ofafa Valley of rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This community that has been seriously affected by HIV, Aids, poverty, and a lack of resources. Woza Moya was established in 2002 and has a primary objective of uplifting lives and reducing poverty through teaching those desperate in need of income a craft. To learn more about the Woza Moya Project and their directives, please visit www.wozamoya.co.za



At the 2018 weaving retreat, Sue Perino was the lucky winner at the silent auction and took the monkey home with her for the year. She added to his embellishments by starting a basket for him and giving him some materials to continue his weaving project.

In 2019 *Weaving in the Sunshine State* retreat, Thando made his return trip to Ft. Myers carrying an envelope filled with scratch off lottery tickets and Mary Jones was the successful bidder.

We were all happy to see his return in 2020 with his new accessories – and his little friend he carries in a basket on his back. The 2020 high bidder – Jan Oberlag – has had an extra year to accessorize Thando. Has he been traveling? Has he met anyone new? Based on Jan's creativity, I'm guessing we will be in for a surprise!

We are starting something that will hopefully become an annual tradition with Thando being the mascot – something like the Christmas tree with woven basket ornaments that we've seen at other events. Thando will be sporting a vintage suitcase in 2022. We are asking as many as possible to bring with them a miniature or ornament sized basket or some other type of small weaving. Thando will be placed in a place of honor and take bids at the Silent Auction for two days. The highest bidder can choose to take Thando for the coming year (returning him in the following year) but they **keep all the small baskets gathered up in his suitcase**. The money that is raised by bidding will then be donated to the charity of choice by Thando's previous year guardian. In this case, Jan Oberlag has chosen the **American Cancer Society** as the charity for 2022.

Will you help by weaving a small basket?

You can either bring your contribution with you to the weaving retreat – or if you are unable to attend but would donate your time and efforts, you can ship your weaving to me. As a group of like-minded crafters, we can choose to make a difference in many charitable organizations. Please help make this a success!