

# St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund

## Newsletter

March 2014

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"Is this not the fast that I have chosen? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the poor and homeless into your house; when you see the naked to clothe him, and not to hide yourself from your own brothers and sisters?" —Isaiah 5:6-7



**There is nothing noble** about being poor. Poverty is praiseworthy only when it is freely and cheerfully chosen. Involuntary poverty leads to desperation, and desperation drives selfishness. In Uganda it is not uncommon after the death of their parents for children to be divided up and sent to live with various family members, often in villages far apart. Physical separation and a sense of abandonment push a child into a self-centered survival mode. All too often we hear the plea "just help *me*" with the implication being that his brothers and sisters can go look for their own sponsors.

Our children are provided with everything they need to do well in class—school fees, lunch, uniforms, shoes, health care—an impossible dream come true. But for some, the brightness of their joy is shaded with sorrow over the plight of their brothers and sisters. These sensitive and selfless kids cannot be truly happy while their siblings are being deprived of an education or are suffering in any way.

### **Wycliff and his sisters**

Wycliff's mother died when he was nine years old; his sisters were six and two. Their father, a taxi driver, kept Wycliff, Susan, and Lynette in school until his own death shortly after Wycliff completed Senior 4. Wycliff came to stay temporarily with an aunt in Kampala while his sisters remained in the village with their grandmother. Wycliff was a good

student and we were happy to sponsor him through Senior 5 and 6, and now medical college.

For four years Susan and Lynette attended rural schools with the help of an uncle. The support was irregular and Wycliff often sacrificed his small personal allowance to keep the girls in school. During the Christmas holiday a year ago, we noticed that Wycliff was losing weight and looking worn-out. When pressed, he told us that he had taken the girls in. The family had abandoned them, saying that they had had enough schooling and they should either go to work or get married. Susan, 17, had one year of high school remaining and Lynette, 14, had just completed Senior 1. Wycliff was working a hospital internship at night, volunteering to tutor our high school students in the morning, and spending his afternoons looking for odd jobs to put food on the table for his suddenly expanded family.

The situation was untenable, especially since Wycliff's next semester in medical school was beginning in a few weeks. We couldn't allow him to bear this burden alone. We provided a bed and mattress for the girls and everything they needed to set up housekeeping for the three of them. We promised a monthly food allowance and enrolled the girls in school. Susan has now completed her final year of high school and we are waiting for the results of the national exams to determine her next level of education.



*Wycliff and Susan*

We will not be supporting them forever. Wycliff completes his studies in August and will qualify as a Clinical Officer, a medical position much in demand in Uganda. One of the administrators at the hospital where Wycliff interned told us that he would have no hesitation to hire him or any of our students because he's observed their behavior and work-ethic. "Besides," he said, "if we did have a problem, we know we could come and talk to their 'parents' and sort things out."

### Henry and Alex

Henry, Alex, and Sharon live with their older sister Prossy and her little boy in a small, one-room flat. Prossy supports the household by taking any job that is available to a high school dropout—fry cook, laundress, babysitter, cleaning lady. Sharon, the youngest, is the one who approached us for sponsorship and when we met the family we welcomed Henry and Alex as well. We placed Henry and Sharon in primary school, and Alex began his first year of high school at an age when he should have been in Senior 4.

Alex suffers from sickle cell disease. His medical condition and lack of school fees were the joint causes of his patchy educational experience. The most common symptoms of sickle cell disease are weakness, fatigue, and shortness of breath, complicated by painful events in the hands, feet, belly, back, and chest. The pain may last from hours to days. Boarding school was not an option for Alex since he needed to be near Mulago Hospital—both for his regular medications and in case of a sudden painful attack.

Henry completed primary school in 2012. While waiting for the results of the national exams to be released, we asked him if he would like to enter Senior 1 as a boarding student or a day scholar. "Boarding," he answered with a huge grin, no doubt anticipating all the benefits, including sleeping on a mattress alone for the first time in his life. When the results were finally announced, he had ranked in

the 1<sup>st</sup> Division nationally, and tied for the top score in our program.

We called Henry in to review his options and told him that his performance qualified him for Mengo Senior School, one of the top secondary day schools in Uganda (*Newsletter June '13*); or he could stick with his original plan and go to boarding school. We had not expected this answer: "Neither," he said. "I've decided to attend the same school as my brother. If he has an attack, I should be there to help him."

Wycliff and Henry found joy through their sacrifices of love. We are blessed to share their joy and we hope they have been an inspiration to you, our faithful partners.

### Peter & Sharon



*At home with Alex and Henry*

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"It is not because God is powerless to feed the poor that He allows us to care for them, but rather because He desires that we should be fruitful in justice and kindness through our own good works." —*St. Basil the Great*

We welcome your donations.  
Checks may be sent to:

**St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund**  
**P.O. Box 285**  
**Chardon, OH 44024-0285**

Or you can donate online at  
[www.ugandachildrensfund.org](http://www.ugandachildrensfund.org)

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