

St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund

Newsletter

March 2020

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"Thank you so much for your concern for us and we promise to study hard and learn as much as we can. And since we don't have a father, we are sure to treat you as one. Our mother also rejoices because she will be able to improve on our standard of living."

—Doreen and Hellen (letter of appreciation)



The life of the single mother in Uganda is fraught with difficult circumstances and tough choices. The education of her children is always a top priority, but she must also concern herself with paying the rent and putting food on the table. With little education and no training, she is a prisoner of poverty. And when things go wrong, there is no "safety net" to catch her when she falls.

In developing countries, steady wage employment is the exception, not the norm. Because there are few opportunities for employment, parents living in poverty turn to self-employment to survive. They work hard but earn little. With limited income, families fall into a cycle of food insecurity and poor health. Single parents know that education is the best way for their children to escape the poverty trap, but without free education, paying school fees becomes another tough choice when faced with the immediate demands of providing food and paying the rent.

Two years ago, Doreen was in her second year of high school and Hellen was in sixth grade. Life wasn't easy, but the family was getting by. That year their father was diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer. He soon became too ill to work, and died within a few months. Dorothy, their mother, had saved enough to start a business of selling charcoal from a shack near their home.



Dorothy's charcoal shack

Then disaster struck. Dorothy was beaten and robbed, and the thugs left her with no money, no charcoal, and a broken leg. She was unable to afford decent medical treatment and the leg has not healed properly. A neighbor loaned her the money to recapitalize her business.

Dorothy was not able to earn enough to keep both girls in school. Secondary school can cost three times as much as primary, and she could only afford to pay tuition to enable Hellen to complete her final year in primary school. Doreen had been an excellent student and ranked near the top of her class, but she dropped out of school and spent the next year working for the neighbor as a housemaid and babysitter to pay off her mother's debt.

Doreen came to our office in November seeking help. She had been referred by another neighbor, the mother of two children in our program. She brought her final report card from the previous year and we were impressed with her performance and sorry that her education had come to a sudden halt. Doreen is now continuing in Senior 3 and Hellen has begun Senior 1. Before beginning the school year, they surprised us with a beautiful and poignant letter of appreciation. (See excerpt above.)



Hellen and Doreen

Secondary School Stars

Senior 6 is the final year of Advanced Level High School for Ugandan students. In November they sit for national exams, the results of which are released at the end of February. The Ugandan school year runs from February through early December for Primary and Secondary school, but the university academic year begins in August as in North America.

'A Level' secondary school is an essential prerequisite for university admission. Students in Senior 5 and 6 choose (with our guidance) a combination of three principal subjects that they focus on in depth for two years. Two of our top performers this year were Enock and Catherine.

Enock lost his mother shortly after he was born and his father died when he was ten. Since then he's been staying with various relatives who were willing to take him in for a period of time. He joined our program in 5th grade when he was twelve years old. He has the unique distinction among all of our students of being the top performer in all three national exams (Primary 7, Senior 4, and Senior 6).

Enock took the very challenging subject combination of Biology, Chemistry, and Math. He is planning to attend Medical

College to study Clinical Medicine and Community Health. Clinical Officers play a huge role in Ugandan health care. They outnumber medical doctors, are highly respected, and have an impressive amount of autonomy. They work in all levels of the public health sector and are greatly in demand throughout the country.



Catherine is a recent addition to our family, having joined in Senior 5. Her father died of a snakebite when she was five years old, and her mother died of malaria four years later. An older brother paid for her schooling until he was arrested after a motorcycle accident. He's been in prison awaiting trial for two years.

Catherine's subject combination was History, Divinity, and Entrepreneurship. She has applied at Nkumba University for a degree in Business Administration.

In this season of hope and renewal, we thank you for your support in renewing these young lives.

Peter & Sharon

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

The St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund is a registered non-profit 501(c)(3) organization eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions.