

St Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund

Newsletter

July 2008

Email: info@ugandachildrensfund.org

"Defend the poor and fatherless;
give justice to the afflicted and the
destitute. Rescue the weak and
the needy." --Psalm 82:3-4a



Dear Friends,

Greetings from Uganda! Shortly before we left the U.S., we were blessed by an official letter from the IRS approving our non-profit 501(c)(3) status. Your donations, including those made prior to formal IRS approval, will qualify as tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

There are so many stories to tell, but we will focus on these two: a student who's been with us for three years and two new girls. The first is about Simon, the younger brother of Faruk whom we told you about in the March newsletter. Simon is the second-born of five orphans we found in 2005 living completely on their own. All the kids are bright, but Simon exceptionally so. He completed his Primary Leaving Exams in the top division and we enrolled him in one of the better secondary schools in Kampala: Mengo Senior School. The school's core values are prominently displayed on campus: "Fearing God; Respect of Persons and Property; Integrity."

Peter recently attended "Senior One Class Day" at Mengo S.S. as Simon's "father." The event began in Simon's classroom with a welcome by the class teacher. There are five "streams" in Senior One, each with over 100 students. Simon and his 106 classmates sit in one large room, three students to a wooden form. We were handed the results of the

beginning of term exams in which Simon ranked 2nd out of 107. In Senior One the students take sixteen subjects, including liberal arts, sciences, and technical courses. The minimum passing grade is 55%, and it was gratifying to see Simon's superior performance, topped by a grade of 100% in Physics.

Simon and his fellow students were bright, neat, and alert—boys and girls transitioning to men and women—proudly wearing the crisp shirts, ties, and sweaters of the school uniform. While waiting for the program to begin, the boy in front of us passed the time by reading *David Copperfield*. Mrs. Namyalo, the class teacher, addressed the audience with charm and quiet confidence. (She is also Simon's Physics teacher.) The other parents in the room obviously represented Uganda's emerging middle class. Observing Simon in this setting, we can't help but reflect on where he was three years ago—parentless and living in a slum, with slim prospects of ever progressing beyond primary school. Now he is a leader among his peers and has the opportunity to achieve great things for himself, his family, and his country.



The second story involves a pair of seven-year-old twin girls, Sarah and Hadijah. Agnes, our Ugandan Field Associate, is well aware of the financial constraints under which we operate and cautiously brought their case before us. "There are two little girls you should meet," she began. "They sell roasted maize near the hospital and the secondary school."

As the narrative unfolded, we learned that the girls get up early in the morning and move about the neighborhood selling ears of maize roasted by their widowed HIV-positive mother. The ears sell for 100 shillings each (about 6¢) and the money is saved for their school fees. The twins work from daybreak until school begins at 8:00 am, and after school they make the rounds again, working until dark. The school, aware that the girls are fatherless, accepted payment in installments. And though the payments were in arrears, they were allowed to continue attending classes. The administration also looked the other way when the girls appeared in class in cheap plastic sandals instead of the regulation shoes and socks.



Hadijah & Sarah with their little brother

Quiet and shy, the girls were nonetheless doing well in school. We were greatly moved by their hard work and commitment to their education, and touched by the compassion shown by the school. We accepted Sarah and Hadijah into our program, paying their current school fees and arrears, and providing them with all required academic materials—and, of course, shoes and socks. We explained to the mother that we had only one condition: the girls were not to work on school days so they would have time to review their lessons. She readily agreed.

With your love and support, we pray that these girls will thrive and grow in knowledge and confidence as has Simon.

Faithfully yours,

Peter & Sharon



A day in the office with our administrator, Frank

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.