

St. NICHOLAS Uganda CHILDREN'S FUND

Newsletter

September 2012

Email: info@ugandachildrensfund.org

"Judge each day not by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant."

—Robert Louis Stevenson



Dear friends,

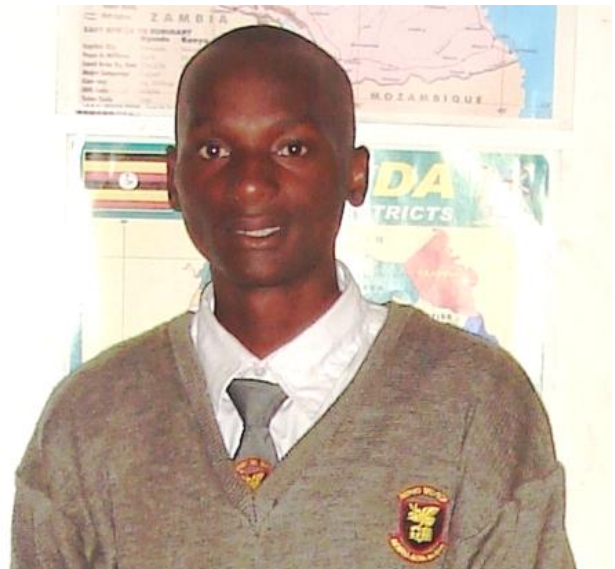
In a few days we will return to our small apartment in Uganda. During our time on this side of the Atlantic, we have been refreshed and nourished by the care and concern of our family, friends, and doctors. We spent the past few months traveling across North America personally sharing about our work with many old and new friends in the United States and Canada. Many thanks to all of you who welcomed us into your churches and your homes. Even more, we thank you for welcoming our Ugandan children into your hearts and for being part of the St. Nicholas family.

No student likes to repeat—not in Uganda or in America or anywhere else. It is a humbling experience to repeat a class while your peers move on to the next level. In Uganda, the issue is further complicated by the fact that parents don't want to pay another year of tuition. For this reason, schools are reluctant to repeat a student no matter how poorly he performs. The school may recommend repeating on the report card, but the recommendation is summarily overruled by the person paying the school fees.

Ugandans are hopeful people by nature. We've learned by sad experience that no matter how much a student promises to "try harder" if we would only allow her to continue, poor grades in Senior 2 always guarantee worse grades in Senior 3.

Titus is one of the brightest and most hard-working students in our program. When he completed Senior 4, he scored so well on the national exam that he was accepted into Mengo Senior School for "A Level" (Senior 5 & 6). Mengo is one of the top high schools in Kampala, especially known for excellence in its science curriculum. Titus, who hopes to become a doctor, qualified for the most difficult subject combination in A Level: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Math.

Titus has not had an easy life. Both parents died when he was too young to remember. Since then he's been cared for by an older brother—a widower who is HIV positive and is raising two children of his own. They rent a small one-room flat. His brother sells charcoal for a living but is frequently debilitated by his condition and often unable to work. Titus acts as a surrogate father to his brother's children and politely turned down our offer of boarding school because he felt he was needed at home.



Titus in his Mengo uniform

When we received Titus's 1st term report card from Mengo, we noticed a decline in his performance. He assured us that he was adjusting to the new school and its higher academic standards and that he would "pull up." There was no question about his work ethic and he spent every

free hour in study groups with other science students. However, by 3rd term he continued to decline and we decided that he would have to repeat Senior 5.

Of course he objected, believing that by sheer force of will he could overcome his academic deficit and somehow succeed in Senior 6. We remained firm. We knew that he had the potential to succeed, but we also knew that failure in Senior 6 would destroy his chances at a university education and perhaps his self-confidence as well.

We encouraged Titus to see this not as a punishment, but as an opportunity—a second chance—and that we cared enough about him to pay for Senior 5 again to give him this chance.

We weren't sure Titus was completely convinced at the time, but he had no choice other than to agree to our decision and repeat Senior 5. It wasn't until he received his first report card that he appreciated the wisdom of what we told him. He received one of the highest aggregate scores in A Level in the toughest course combination that is offered. Now in Senior 6, Titus continues to perform well and is looking forward to continuing his education at the university level next year.

Ronald is seven years old and is HIV positive, as is his mother. His father died the year he was born and his mom roasts maize to sell by the roadside. At the end of his first year in primary school, he was provisionally promoted to P2. After a couple weeks of class, his teacher decided he was not able to manage and sent him back to P1. We learned about this when we found Ronald crying in our office.

Repeating the younger primary school students is usually not so challenging. They pout, maybe squeeze out a solitary tear or two, then join their class, make new friends, and move forward. Such was not the case with Ronald.

We met with the P1 teacher and she informed us that Ronald was discouraged and had no interest in class participation or activities. We decided that this required some personal intervention. We called him in and explained to him why we supported the teachers' decision. For an example we used George, an older boy in P5 whom Ronald looked up to. We had made George repeat P1 and he is now the top-performing student in his class. We showed Ronald our Honor Roll with George's name on top of the list. His eyes lit up and he began to understand. A different boy left the office than the one who entered. Ronald completed P1, is now in P2, and his name is on the Honor Roll among the top ten of our primary students.



Ronald with Peter

The seeds we plant in these young lives are made possible only through your generosity and your prayers. Thank you.

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
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