

St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund Newsletter September 2015

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"God is in the slums, in the cardboard boxes where the poor play house. God is in the silence of a mother who has infected her child with a virus that will end both their lives . . . and God is with us, if we are with them." *-Bono*



The secular world seems always to be concerned with the disparity between the rich and the poor, and what "government" should do to solve the problem. As believers, it's tempting to weigh in on the debate, especially if we truly care about the plight of the poor. By contrast, St. John Chrysostom did not believe in abstract schemes; he preached the creative power of love. He said, "Material justice cannot be accomplished by compulsion . . . the only way to achieve true justice is to change people's hearts first, and then they will joyfully share their wealth."



From the slums of Kampala . . .

The early teen years, when children pass from primary school to secondary school, are crucial in Uganda, and fraught with peril. There is no public "middle school" to ease the transition—in fact there is no free school at all. Secondary school fees can triple those of primary school, and are beyond the reach of parents and guardians of the orphans and vulnerable children in

our urban slum neighborhood. Girls are particularly vulnerable, and those whose education has been interrupted may reach fifteen or sixteen by the time they complete primary. No longer in the safe and structured confines of the classroom, their self-esteem plummets, and many fall prey to opportunistic young men who tempt them with gifts of trinkets, clothes, and perfume. Others are sent to work as housemaids for little more than room and board, and become susceptible to sexual exploitation by the man of the house.

We make sure that our own students avoid these dangers and seamlessly continue their education at the high school level under our care and supervision. We also prioritize new applicants from the age group that is most at risk—teenage girls and boys just out of primary school and with no hope for the future.



. . . to fresh air and a positive environment.

We offer each high school student, both new and continuing, the opportunity to attend boarding school. St. Antonios Orthodox Secondary School is located in a rural village an hour and a half from Kampala, far from the temptations and hazards of the city. Here teens can learn and grow in an atmosphere of caring, faith, and security. They become a new family—brothers and sisters with common aspirations and goals. The older kids welcome the freshmen into the group and help them adjust to their new world. Relationships are formed which endure to college and beyond.

Wonder Girls

Last year's crop of first-year high school students included four girls whose scholastic performance has been outstanding. Two of them were with us in primary school and two were new to our program. All four lost their fathers through death or abandonment. They are living proof that children from impoverished backgrounds can achieve academic success if given the chance. In a class of seventy students, these girls represented four of the top ten. On their recent report cards, each one was praised by the class teacher as being well-behaved in addition to being a top performer.

Shamirah was our superstar, ranking 1st in the class of 70. Her father had abandoned the family when she was small, only to die of AIDS a few years ago. She lives in a two-room house with her mother and four other children. Her mom sells charcoal from home to support the family. Shamirah earned Distinctions in ten of her fifteen subjects with superlative results in Political Education, Math, Geography, Physics, and Literature.

Hilda ranked 4th in the class with seven Distinctions. Her best subjects were History, Chemistry, and Physics. Also abandoned by their father, Hilda and her brother and sister stay with their mother in a one-room flat. Mom fries pancakes, cassava, and samosas to sell to neighbors.



Shamirah

Hilda

Sharon was 8th, earning six Distinctions. She excelled in Literature and Computer. Her father died when she was five and she

and her brothers are cared for by an older sister in a one-room house not far from where we live. Their mother remained in the village where she is a subsistence farmer. The food that mom grows helps to sustain the family. One of Sharon's older brothers suffers from sickle-cell anemia.

Grace rounds out the group in 10th place. She was seven years old and her brother James was five when their father died in an auto accident. Their mother scrubs floors for a local school near their one-room hut, earning around \$30 per month. Grace received five Distinctions, with her best subjects being Literature, English, and Physics.



Sharon

Grace

These bright and beautiful girls appreciate the opportunity that your support is giving them, and they're making the most of it. They, and all of our children, thank you for being "with them."

With love and gratitude,

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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