

St. NICHOLAS Uganda CHILDREN'S FUND

Newsletter

December 2021

Email: info@ugandachildrensfund.org

"Christmas is most truly Christmas when we celebrate it by giving the light of love to those who need it most." – Ruth Carter Stapleton



Boda-boda motorcycle taxis are a fast and inexpensive way to get around the congested streets of Kampala. Demand is great, and a high rate of unemployment has driven many young men into the business of picking up and dropping off passengers. Boda-bodas are also the leading cause of injury and death associated with road accidents.



Boda-bodas in Kampala

Steven earned his living as a boda-boda rider (driver). Working every day from dawn until long after dusk, he did his best to support his wife, Mariam, and their two children. We became acquainted with the family through Catherine, Steven's younger sister.

Catherine and her brother Solomon were living with their mother and attending village schools. Their father had died of a snakebite when his wife was pregnant with Solomon and their mother died of malaria three years later. Catherine was nine years old at the time. After the burial, Steven and Mariam welcomed the two orphans into their one-room home in Kampala.

For ten years the hard-working couple struggled to keep all the children in school. Solomon had completed primary school and Catherine was remaining with two years of high school when disaster struck. In June of 2017, Steven was involved in a road accident and was arrested. The family's main source of income evaporated overnight and the children were forced to drop out of school. To help support the family, Catherine roasted and sold maize on the street and Solomon combed the dusty paths of the slums collecting and selling plastic scrap. A sympathetic neighbor directed Catherine to our office. We were impressed with her sincerity and determination and she and Solomon became part of the St. Nicholas family.



Catherine



Solomon

We enrolled Solomon in a vocational secondary school to study auto mechanics. Catherine completed high school and is now at Nkumba University pursuing a degree in Business Administration. Their

brother Steven was held responsible for the traffic accident, found guilty, and sentenced to four years in prison.

Now that Solomon's and Catherine's education was taken care of, Mariam washed clothes for neighbors and worked in their vegetable gardens to keep her two children in school. But when Uganda went on lockdown due to the COVID crisis, the economy tanked and many of her clients could no longer afford to hire her. Steven was slated to be released in August this year, and we committed to support the children in school until the family could get back on its feet.

In July we received devastating news from Catherine. Steven had died in prison, reportedly from malaria, one month before his scheduled release. Before and during Steven's incarceration Mariam had not hesitated to take Catherine and Solomon into her home and to care for them. There was no question that her children, Edward and Victoria, would immediately come under our care and that their education would be assured.



Edward, Victoria, and Mariam at their home

Struggle, perseverance & opportunity

Titus joined our program when he was fifteen. Both of his parents had died of AIDS and the brother who was caring for him was also HIV-positive. Titus excelled in all of his high school subjects, earning Distinctions in Chemistry and Biology on his O Level exams. In A Level, he took the challenging subject combination of Biology, Physics, Math, and Chemistry which qualified him to enroll for a degree in Biomedical Laboratory Technology at Makerere University.



Titus

The biomedical field in Uganda is difficult to break into without experience, so Titus did whatever was necessary to earn a living. He worked as a lab assistant to obtain practical know-how and taught sciences at a secondary school in western Uganda. He picked up valuable contacts on the way and

eventually one of them paid off. Test & Fly Laboratories opened in 2020 as a response to the COVID pandemic. In addition to COVID PCR testing with same-day results, Test & Fly offered a wide range of other specialized laboratory diagnostic services utilizing state-of-the-art equipment. Last year Titus was offered the position of laboratory manager.



Titus (r) with co-workers

When we visited the lab for our mandatory pre-travel COVID test, Titus facilitated the process and introduced us to his co-workers as his parents. It was obvious that he was loved and respected by every member of the staff. He also shared the good news that his probationary period was completed and that he had signed a contract for a permanent position.

Thank you for your love, support, and prayers throughout the year. We wish you all the joy of the season and a happy and healthy New Year!

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

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