

Partners' Progress-Uganda

The Newsletter of Real Partners Uganda, Inc.

September 2013

'A Place to Sing'

"Lukaya is not a good place. There is killing, stealing, poverty and bad manners. Here, trucks go from Congo all the way to Tanzania. There are many professions in Lukaya. Most are sellers and traders. There are very many children in Lukaya. Many of them do not have homes or go to school. Some do not have parents. **I am lucky; my sponsor sends me to Mustard Seed Academy.** I am in P-7. I used to live very far away. It could take me three hours to walk to school, but now I live with other girls in the dormitory. Auntie is the Matron. She makes sure we sleep well and are clean. She lives here with her two daughters."



Dorica: "My life is good."

positive. When I was thirteen, I got in trouble. The sister to my mother, she burned my hands. It pained me very much. But, I am happy at Mustard School. And my teachers, they love me so much. They care for me, and they teach me. It is a place where I can sing, and I love to sing."

"My name is Nakayando Dorica. I am fourteen years old. *Obulamu bwange bulungi*: **My life is good.**"

College student, Nathaniel Atwater volunteered for five weeks in Uganda this summer and the script above is from a video he produced. His goal was to give insight about Lukaya and the wonderful work that Mustard Seed Academy is doing. The video can be viewed at: <https://vimeo.com/71583243>

Dorica, who narrates the video, is preparing for the National P-7 Leavers Exam, which will be given in November. MSA arranges special dormitories for the P-7 students to allow them to attend after supper lessons and concentrate on preparing for the exams. The results of this exam determine whether students continue on to secondary school.

Lessons from Uganda

by Carrie Harless-visitor July 2013

I was amazed as I stood at the most primitive of blackboards teaching first-graders (P-1) multiplication. They were very bright and eager to learn! It is hard to believe that these children, in a school without running water, electricity, or even the most basic of school supplies, were more advanced than or own American third-graders. **One text book, twenty meager desks and over 40 dusty, dirty beautiful children all eagerly sitting in a humble room that many Americans would see unfit for even animals--and all overflowing with indescribable joy! It was wonderful.**



P-1 Students, "Very bright and eager to learn."

That afternoon I was walking home from school with the children who live at Rapha's House. I hung back a little to snap some photos of the girls making their way back to the home named for Jehovah Rapha "God my healer" from Exodus. Lost in thought walking down the red dirt road, a little hand slipped into mine. Barely audible, a sweet voice asked, "Teacher will you walk with me to my home?" This sweet girl was Jesca one of my students from earlier and only 6 years old. My response was a simple, "Yes, please!" but the smile that flooded her face was indescribable. I walked with her up to her mud hut after about a kilometer and greeted her mother. The gratitude for this gesture of walking her home was overwhelming. She eagerly waved as I continued down the path to rejoin the others. I will likely never see this child again- but the lesson she taught me will never depart. Aren't our lives like long dusty paths? Dangers, temptations, unknowns, and hurts to either side? And don't we too have a Teacher just ahead longing for us to slip our hand into His that we might find His comfort, love, security, teaching, and provision? I praise God for Jesca's trust in me, for her desire to share me with her Mama, and for her not letting an opportunity pass her by. I am humbled in remembering that I need to do the same; and do it with joy and anticipation for my Savior.

Social Work Professors Teach “Service Learning”

Since its founding, MSA has been finding ways to help students make connections between classroom learning and real life, to make learning more practical and useful than the typical Ugandan school experience. With the opening of the secondary school this year, the leadership wanted to expand on this tradition and add a community service component to the students’ experience. Diane Falk, Real Partners Uganda board member and social work professor, suggested that a “Service Learning” program could accomplish the desired goals, and the school’s leadership adopted her idea.



MSA Secondary School students are eager to be helpful. With Service Learning, they will be asked to integrate classroom lessons with lessons from their service experiences.

In July, Diane and a colleague, Rob Barney from Stockton College, in NJ, brought two of their students, Cathrine Petty and Johanna Ryden, to Uganda to volunteer at MSA. General Manager George Kateregga asked them to lead workshops on Service Learning for the secondary school faculty so that MSA could get started with this innovative program.

In his training session for the teachers, Dr. Barney gave an overview of Service Learning, explaining that it blends traditional classroom lessons with service by assigning students to community service projects designed to help them connect learning to real issues in their community. As a result, students gain a sense of civic responsibility as well as pride in their accomplishments. He also discussed mapping of assets such as skills, abilities, talents and resources of individuals and communities.

In her session, Dr. Falk credited the teachers for good ideas proposed for service projects. She asked the teachers to split into small teams and walk the MSA property, identifying assets. Enthusiasm was high as team members reported how empowering it was for them to evaluate the assets of their community and to recognize that they could move forward with developing Service Learning assignments. By the end of the training, teachers felt confident they would be able to move ahead on their own to implement the program.

For more on the Stockton College trip, visit the RPU website: www.realpartnersuganda.org

We Are Moving!

For orphans and vulnerable children in Lukaya there is no better place to have a secure, happy, positive childhood than Mustard Seed Academy. The school itself is a very humble place that, since 2009, has occupied temporary, rather shabby buildings on a tiny campus, too small even for a playground. That is all about to change. A lovely 14-acre property about a mile off the main highway will be the permanent campus for the primary and secondary schools. The master plan is ready-- developed by architects and engineers from Engineering Ministries International. And, RPU has started fund-raising for the first phase of construction.



Classrooms at MSA primary section are “rustic,” small and crowded. The campus is equally inadequate for 300+ students.

In the mean time, Mustard Seed must vacate the primary campus when the lease expires in November. Both primary and secondary classes will be shifted to the new campus in time for the new school year in January 2014. Over the next few months our Ugandan partners will be busy taking materials from the current campus together with timber from a eucalyptus forest on the new property to prepare the new location. As with any move, there will be costs, but minimal ones for such a major transition.

With this issue of *Partners’ Progress* we launch a “**Campus Warming**” campaign to provide funds to complete an efficient, economical move. The move will cost close to \$20,000, or \$50 per student. Plans include a new permanent office building and a series of transitional classrooms with some new furniture, plus toilet facilities, a kitchen and security fencing. After additional development is completed, the transitional structures will be converted for different uses. The new location will be a major upgrade for MSA with better classrooms and large spaces for play, and it will be a big first step toward a campus to call our own.

We invite you, our partners, to give a “campus-warming” gift. One student’s cost is \$50, ten is \$500, and a whole class can be moved for \$2,000. The enclosed slip is provided for your convenience, or you can quickly donate on our website.

Sponsor A Day-a new way to help

All MSA students receive the same high level of care whether they are sponsored or not, and there are some aspects of MSA's care, such as trips to the hospital, that are not covered by the sponsorship donations or the small fees paid by parents of unsponsored children.

We are pleased to introduce a program that gives you a new way to be a part of this everyday care. "Sponsor a Day" allows you to dedicate a onetime donation (\$200.00 suggested) in honor of a loved one or to commemorate a special occasion. We have printed honor cards for you to give to the honoree, and the special day will be celebrated at MSA and on the RPU website. See the reply form (or RPU website) for details about donating to this program.

Not Only Money

With so many plans and dreams we are asking for more help from our faithful and generous partners. We need to spread the word, and the work.

Presentations--We need help with giving more presentations. We are happy to provide the needed video, Power Point, brochures (and possibly presenters, if needed). Successful presentations have been done as sermons as well as talks to civic organizations such as Rotary Clubs.

Volunteers--Opportunities to serve exist in Uganda and here in the States. **The next time to participate in a "Service Safari" is from Feb. 19-March 6.** These mission trips include spending 8-9 days serving in Lukaya at the school/project (while staying at a nice retreat house run by Catholic nuns) and four days of learning more about the country, its diversity and natural riches at two national parks. Please contact Kristen Pettet (pettet.kristen@gmail.com) if you are interested in exploring this possibility. The deadline (sign-up and deposit) is Nov. 15. (Approximate cost including airfare from NYC is \$3000.)

Fund-raiser activities--Two of our partners have gotten their churches to sponsor auctions that have benefitted RPU while giving good publicity and providing a fun time for the attendees. What can your group/church do?

Spread the Word-New Brochures

Included in this mailing is Real Partners Uganda's new brochure. We hope that you will take time to read it and feel some pride in understanding what you have helped to accomplish. We also hope that you will pass the brochure on to someone who would be blessed by joining you in partnering with RPU to "move mountains" in Lukaya. Let us know if you need more brochures.

Lives Changed for Ugandans and Americans

June and July were busy and productive months at Tree of Life Ministries thanks to several visitors and volunteers who spent from 2 days to 5 weeks in Lukaya.

Nathaniel Atwater from Allendale, NJ and Gettysburg College and Andrew Moore from Eudora, Kansas and Johnson County Community College stayed for 5 weeks in the apartment next door to Headmaster John Robert. Nate focussed on photography and videography, while Andrew used his expertise in farming to help in

TOLM's agricultural projects. Both young men worked hard, learned a lot and were popular with students of all ages as well as the staff at MSA/TOLM. They came home with enthusiasm to share their life-changing experiences.

Johanna Ryder and Cathrine Petty from Stockton College both came home eager to share what they learned from working with the children at MSA.

White House Points of Light Ceremony

Kathryn and Dana Hiscock

Joe and Elaine Griswold, whose work in Uganda was recognized by the Points of Light Foundation in 2010, were among a small group of prior recipients to be honored at The White House during an event hosted by President and Mrs. Obama on July 15. The 5000th Point of Light was awarded during the ceremony attended by Former President George H.W. Bush and his wife Barbara and other family members. It was President Bush who coined the phrase "points of light" and established the Foundation to recognize "ordinary people who reach beyond themselves to touch the lives of those in need, bringing hope and opportunity, care and friendship. By giving so generously of themselves, these remarkable individuals show us not only what is best in our heritage, but what all of us are called to become."



Before the ceremony held in the East Room: Bernie Milano, Elaine and Joe Griswold, with Neil Bush, CEO of Points of Light Foundation

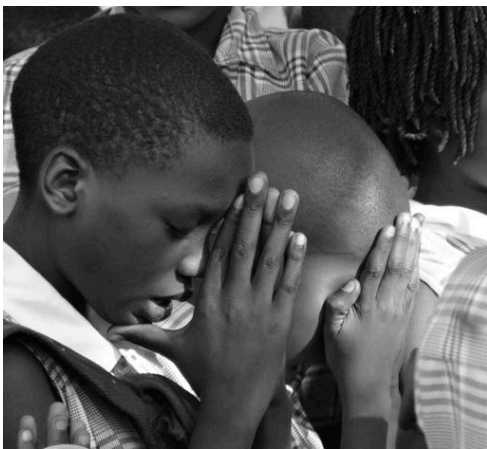
In extending the invitation, the Points of Light Foundation said the following about Dr. and Mrs. Griswold's work in Uganda -- "**Yours is an incredibly powerful testimony to the power of individuals to create change and exactly the inspiration that can move others to take action. Cross-cultural partnership, innovation, ingenuity, determination and impact are truly the characteristics we want to profile . . .**"

Dana and I have been working with Elaine and Joe since Real Partners Uganda's genesis in 2003. We have been first-hand witnesses to their unswerving devotion to the project, their tireless work and their vision -- "To reflect Christ's love in the world, by working in partnership with Ugandans to develop sustainable learning communities that model effective education, conservation, health care and economic development."

We give special thanks to our friends, Bernie Milano and Sharon Pierson, who have been generous and consistent supporters of the project. Bernie, who serves on the Points of Light Board, attended the White House event and, with Sharon, provided personal hosting for the Griswolds with introductions to many other guests.



"My life is good."



Carrie Harless and friends at Rapha's House. Thanks to Julie Witcher for the photo.



Andrew and friends. Thanks to Nathaniel Atwater for the photo.

Students, teachers, staff and visitors pray, eat, play, learn, sing, and serve at MSA. More than a school for orphaned and vulnerable children, students receive not only an education but love and hope for a bright future..