

# St. NICHOLAS Uganda CHILDREN'S FUND

## Newsletter

September 2014

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"Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending."

—Carl Bard

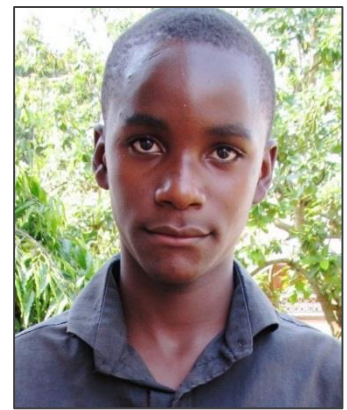


The third and final term of the Ugandan school year began on Sept. 8. As we prepare for our imminent return to Uganda, we're also reviewing the 2<sup>nd</sup> term report cards which have just arrived by post. We have a number of students that unflinchingly perform well, and this term we were pleasantly surprised by some very good reports from students that have had problems in the past, both academic and behavioral. Here are their stories:

**Christopher**, John, and Maria joined our program in 2007. Their father had died the previous year and their mother was holding the family together by washing clothes for neighbors and cleaning for the landlord in exchange for rent on their one-room flat. Christopher was already nine years old when we put him in Primary 2 (second grade). Throughout primary school he was a consistently marginal student. We repeated him in P3, and he barely managed to pass from grade to grade until he reached P7, his last year in Primary School. With the national Primary Leaving Exam (PLE) coming up at the end of the year, we had little hope that he would score high enough to qualify for secondary school.

Somehow, at the age of fifteen and still in primary school, he found the resolve to buckle down and begin taking his studies seriously. With over 100 students in his classroom, he could not expect a lot of personal attention from the teachers; the motivation had to come from within. When the PLE results were released, we

were elated to see that Christopher passed all of his subjects and ranked in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division (out of 4). Now he had to face another challenge: Secondary School. It's a difficult transition because the number of subjects taken increases from four in P7 to fifteen in Senior 1.



Christopher did not disappoint. His new-found dedication to learning produced a solid performance as a boarding student at St. Antonios Orthodox Secondary School. This term he ranked seventh among our S1 students, earning Distinctions in Computer, Physics, Biology, History, and Fine Art.

**Frank** entered our program in the same year as Christopher, at the same age but in Primary 4. His father had died when Frank was small; his mother found another man and Frank found himself living with his grandmother and ten other grandchildren in JjaJja's two room house.

We had to repeat Frank in P4 but his problems extended beyond the academic. After two years and a series of disciplinary problems at school and at home, JjaJja had had enough and sent him to the family village in a remote rural district. Three years went by until the prodigal grandson realized what an opportunity he had wasted. In the village, he worked in the fields, was tormented by chiggers, and fell two years behind in school. He begged JjaJja for another chance, and she appealed to us on his behalf.

In 2012, at the age of fourteen, he accepted to join Primary 6 on probation. For the next two years, not only did he work to improve his performance, but was a model student in attitude and behavior.



His efforts were rewarded with a Division II result on the PLE exam, just one point behind Christopher, with whom he is a fellow Senior 1 boarding student. Ranking eighth among our S1 students, Frank earned Distinctions in Biology, Physics, Math, and Divinity.

We briefly introduced you to **Lynette** in our March newsletter. Orphaned as a child, she narrowly escaped being married off by relatives at the age of fourteen and came to Kampala with her sister Susan to stay with their older brother Wycliff. After the recent turmoil in their lives, we felt it was best not to send the girls to boarding school just yet, but to give the three of them time to bond as a family after four years of separation. Lynette had completed Senior 1 at a village school, so we enrolled her in Senior 2 as a day scholar.

As the youngest, Lynette didn't quite know what to make of her new situation. The substandard quality of village education did not prepare her for the rigors of secondary school in Kampala and she performed poorly. She became sullen, ignored our advice, and disregarded our concern. After what she'd been through, it's not surprising that she had difficulty trusting anyone.

Inevitably, she failed Senior 2 and we insisted that she repeat. She cried and she refused. We patiently explained that we cared about her and about her future, and that this was her best chance to turn things around. We offered her boarding school, hoping that a change of venue would give her the opportunity to make a fresh start.

Eventually she came around, and agreed to try S2 at St. Antonios Secondary School, where none of her classmates knows that she is repeating. The new Lynette completed the first two terms of the school year with honors, ranking 10<sup>th</sup> in her class in first term, and 5<sup>th</sup> in second term. She earned Distinctions in seven of her fourteen subjects, including Physics, Biology, Literature, and History.



Christopher, Frank, and Lynette are working on their own brand new endings. We're proud of their determination to succeed. Thank you, dear friends, for providing the means of their success.

*Peter & Sharon*

"Every day is a new opportunity. You can build on yesterday's success or put its failures behind and start over again." —*Bob Feller*

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  
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