

St. NICHOLAS Uganda CHILDREN'S FUND

Newsletter

December 2010

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"Love is like the flame of a candle. However many candles you light from the flame, the initial flame remains unaffected. It doesn't lessen at all. And every freshly lit candle has as much flame as the others do."

—Elder Epiphanius of Athens



"I'll Be Home for Christmas" goes the popular song. "Snow and mistletoe, and presents on the tree." But for Juliet and her family, Christmas was going to be just another hot, damp day in a mud-brick hut in the middle of a papyrus swamp.

Juliet is sixteen. Little Janie is five. Their brother, Henry, had forgotten that he will turn fourteen on Christmas day. Their father died of AIDS shortly after Janie was born and their mother is HIV positive. The three children and their mother were sleeping on chunks of foam piled on a single bed. Over the past five years, the swamp had risen and now the floor flooded after every heavy rain. The bed was elevated on broken pieces of concrete to keep it out of the water.



The Family Bed

During the current rainy season, their situation became intolerable. Henry lost a shoe in the mud on his way to school and had to return home. Juliet was unable to study for the upcoming national exams. Janie was becoming more and more introverted. An emergency home visit revealed to us just how much their living conditions had deteriorated.

Although the primary mission of the Uganda Children's Fund is education, the health and welfare of our children is critical—not only for success in school but sometimes for their very survival. We had already been providing this family with a small food allowance and now we had to move to the next level. We discussed possible solutions with our staff, Frank and Agnes, and we all agreed that the family had to leave the swamp. Agnes used her local contacts to find an apartment that we could rent for them—one that sat high and dry. We ordered beds and bought mattresses, sheets, and blankets. Juliet was so happy that she insisted they move to the new place even before the beds were delivered!



The New Apartment

Home for the Holidays

In six years of writing newsletters, we rarely have done a sequel to a story. However, the account of Jackie and Justine (March 2010) closed with only a partial resolution. We left the orphaned sisters and their Aunt Betty in temporary living quarters with Betty trying to support the girls by washing clothes for neighbors who are almost as poor as she. Another crisis came in June when Betty became sick and the landlord evicted them without

recourse. Frank immediately took charge of the situation and found a house under construction near his own home. It was roofed and secure. He persuaded the neighbor to allow Betty and the girls to stay rent-free until the house was complete. We also provided a weekly food allowance while Betty was recovering from her illness.



Peter & Justine

We knew that a permanent solution must be found so that the family could become self-sustaining. The trading center in their neighborhood had no newspaper stand and Betty thought she could succeed in that business, so we gave her a small amount of capital and let her give it a try. The business took off and we were able to discontinue the food allowance that same month.



In October, Frank's neighbor was ready to move into the house. Betty's business was growing at a rate that would allow her to be self-supporting in a few months. She found a decent apartment near the newsstand and we advanced the required three month deposit.

For the first time in years, the girls will be spending Christmas in a place they can call their own.

After they were settled in their new place, Peter visited the apartment and was greeted at the door by Jackie speaking these words, "You are welcome in our home."

Christmas Thanks

Thanks to your love, prayers, and financial support, we have been able to assist a record number of children, young adults, and families in 2010. We ended the year with 105 students in primary school, 111 in secondary school, eight in vocational training, and three in university. Eighteen struggling families have received additional charitable support, both short-term and ongoing.

Wishing you all the joy of the season, with love and appreciation,

Peter & Sharon



Jackie: "You are welcome."

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 a registered non-profit 501(c)(3) organization eligible to receive tax deductible contributions.