

St. NICHOLAS Uganda CHILDREN'S FUND

Newsletter

December 2015

Email: info@ugandachildrensfund.org

"Education . . . beyond all other devices of human origin, is a great equalizer of men . . . It does better than to disarm the poor of their hostility toward the rich; it prevents *being poor*."

— Horace Mann



Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador once said, "We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the Master Builder and the worker." As our tenth anniversary year draws to a close, we reflect on the past, the present, and the future. In December 2005, we were supporting fifty-two full-time students; all but five were in primary school. Higher education, adulthood, and careers were not even on our radar. We were content to see our children receive another year of education, school lunches, and healthcare. We didn't know how long we would stay in Uganda or what the future held for us or for them. We tried to meet their immediate needs and entrusted the future to God.

Year by year the children grew older and moved up the educational ladder. At the same time, we were increasing our intake of new high school students because of the extreme circumstances of so many impoverished, at-risk teenagers. By 2010 we had more secondary students than primary school children.

The following year was pivotal. We decided that we would not stop at high school but would offer every graduate an opportunity to attend university, business school, or vocational training. We set forth a lofty goal, "to break the cycle of poverty into which these children were born." Considering that the unemployment rate for young adults in Uganda was and still is over 60%, we privately wondered if we weren't being overly optimistic!

As we conclude our 11th year, almost half of our 250 students are in high school, and 30% are in post-secondary programs. The walls of our small office are decorated with the framed photos of our university and vocational graduates. Beyond all expectations, we've been blessed to witness the first fruits of that decision. Here are three of our success stories.

In 2005, **Sarah** was the eldest of a dozen or more cousins living in a single room with their ancient but scrappy grandmother. Her father was long dead and her mentally ill mother, when she wasn't wandering the streets, would stand and shout outside the primary school causing no end of shame and embarrassment for the sensitive 7th grader.



Sarah in P.7

In high school, the security of being a boarding student with a close group of friends helped Sarah grow in confidence and self-esteem. She returned home to pursue a Diploma in Secretarial Studies and began to assist her mother with her medications. Sarah graduated last year and recently has been hired as the school secretary for her alma mater, St. Antonios Orthodox Secondary School.



Sarah moves into her new staff quarters.

Charles lost his father at the age of seven and his mother eight years later. After his mother's death, he and his two brothers briefly stayed with an aunt, but the burden of caring for her own four children plus the three big boys became overwhelming. Charles took responsibility for his younger brothers, and they moved out on their own. He apprenticed himself to a carpenter and worked while completing secondary school.



The three brothers have been part of our family for more than five years. The younger boys are both in high school and Charles graduated from Ndejje University in October with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. Currently he is working as an Estates Officer for a property management company in Kampala.

When **Immaculate** was brought to us she had just been sent to the city from a village where she was staying with her grandmother. Her father and siblings were all dead and her mother was terminally ill. The teenager was now living with a dysfunctional group of young relatives who ran a local pub. Her first year with us in Senior 3, she missed her final exams because they pulled her out of school to work at the bar.

We told the family that the only way Immaculate would succeed as a secondary student was if we removed her from that environment and put her in boarding school. Immaculate reluctantly agreed to repeat S.3 at the new school, even though she was now eighteen.



Making the most of a second chance, Immy successfully completed high school and we enrolled her in a tailoring course at a vocational and business institute. She discovered that she had a gift for fashion design and her talents were noticed by the faculty and administration of the school. Immediately upon completing her Diploma, she was hired as an instructor. She is now the head of the tailoring department and a role model for our other vocational students.



May Peace be your gift at Christmas and your blessing all year through! With love,

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



University Class of 2025