

IN LOVING MEMORIAM

The board, staff and volunteers of Children of Uganda wish to extend our deepest condolences to our friends and family in Uganda who were touched by the extraordinary life and selfless commitment of Sister Rose Muyinza. Sister Rose passed away in October 2009—after bravely battling Alzheimer’s disease and diabetes for several years. Often described as Uganda’s Mother Teresa, Sister Rose was truly a remarkable woman whose lifelong mission of loving and serving orphaned children spanned nearly four decades.

Sister Rose started the Daughters of Charity (DOC) orphanages in 1971 initially to care for homeless girls. Over the years, she would open three orphanages throughout Uganda and ultimately cared for thousands of vulnerable boys and girls who had been devastated by war, extreme poverty and AIDS. As a result of receiving this critical care, these children grew up to lead successful and productive lives. Many became doctors, teachers and professionals—all giving back to their beloved homeland—because of the love, care and compassion they received from Sister Rose.

Children of Uganda proudly began our partnership with Sister Rose and DOC nearly 15 years ago. Together, we forged a bond that enabled us to care for children who may have otherwise fallen between the cracks in a society overwhelmed with the world’s largest AIDS orphan population. The 600 children in our program today (in addition to all of the children we have served over the last 15 years) have all resided in one of the homes founded by Sister Rose.

This visionary woman served numerous roles in the lives of our children—mother, father, teacher, nurse, and perhaps the most powerful one—their personal champion. She inspired the children to live with joy, hope and a genuine sense of purpose. One child described growing up with Sister Rose best when he said, “In the orphanage, it was great to know I had a path to my future. Every day I woke up and had something to eat, had someone to show me love and to be friends with.”

Thank you, Sister Rose for being a devoted friend to us all. Thank you for shining a light on an illuminating path that led thousands of children out of their darkest time. And lastly, thank you for showing



Sister Rose with Teddy Mata Aribiah—one of our graduates cared for by Children of Uganda and Sister Rose.

us how one person can truly make an extraordinary difference. Your life’s work and remarkable legacy will live on forever in the lives of the children touched by your loving service.

Children of Uganda has established a scholarship fund in honor of Sister Rose. This scholarship will help fund the older children in our program who are currently unsponsored. If you would like to contribute to the Sister Rose Scholarship Fund—please contact our Executive Director Pamela Brannon at [pamela@childrenofuganda.org](mailto:pamela@childrenofuganda.org) or (800) 531-.9612



Sister Rose with our Board Vice-Chair Jan Smart and a local priest at the Philip’s House Commemoration ceremony in 2002. Philip’s House (named in honor of Ms. Smart’s brother) serves the disabled population cared for by Children of Uganda. Sister Rose held a special place in her heart for children living with disabilities.

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## ALL WE NEED IS LOVE

Brett and Jenine Cravatt have an enduring love for each other and Uganda. To celebrate this love, and their recent wedding, they decided to give the children we serve a heartfelt gift. Long-time sponsors and supporters of Children of Uganda (COU), their commitment to our mission is extraordinary and will help ensure that the 600 children that COU cares for will be guaranteed an education and a chance for a bright future.

Brett first began sponsoring three of our children in 2006. After a life-changing journey through Africa after college—Brett decided

he wanted to give back to the people of Uganda who had been so generous and inspiring to him. After meeting and falling in love, Brett and Jenine knew their wedding would be an ideal vehicle to share their passion for Children of Uganda.

So, they asked all of their friends and family to forgo wedding presents and instead donate to Children of Uganda. We were amazed (and thrilled!!) when the donations began pouring in...a true testament to this remarkable couple and their selfless commitment to our beloved children.

They have already made a huge impact on the children they currently sponsor—one in particular—Peter Bukenya. Peter graduated from secondary school at the end of 2007 and began working in our library, which is located on the grounds of

the Sabina Primary Boarding School. Peter continued to correspond with Brett and expressed his desire to one day attend college. Brett and Jenine felt strongly that Peter needed a university education to



**Above: Wedded Bliss! Brett and Jenine on their wedding day—September 19, 2009. Right: Brett and Jenine share a special love for each other and the children we serve.**



increase his chances for future success and independence. We're happy to report that Peter was accepted into college this fall and has just completed his first semester. He shared with us recently that Brett and Jenine are his inspiration to continue working hard in school so that he can follow in their footsteps and give back to children in Uganda.

Thanks to Brett, Jenine and the remarkable generosity of their loved ones—many more children will have the same chances for a good education and a promising future. The money raised has been dedicated to the construction of a multi-purpose center for the children and a scholarship fund for our unsponsored secondary children—both of which will be named in their honour.

We are enormously grateful to Brett and Jenine for this remarkable act of generosity and kindness. We wish them both a lifetime of love and happiness!



**Peter Bukenya—one of the children sponsored by Brett and Jenine—is all smiles thanks to their remarkable love and support.**



## GIRL POWER

A few months ago, one of the girls in our program named Jessica wrote to her sponsor exclaiming her excitement about Club GLOW. Jessica shared in the letter that the club had increased her self-confidence tremendously, helped her to understand and respect her body and that she felt as though she could now achieve anything in her future. We received several other letters from our girls who share Jessica's enthusiasm and newly-discovered girl power!

We recently caught up with Amy Wilson—our Peace Corps volunteer—to talk about the club she initiated nearly a year ago when she began her Peace Corps stint with Children of Uganda.

Club GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) grew out of a Peace Corps program called Camp GLOW—a week-long camp aimed at empowering girls. Amy believed a club (as opposed to a one-time camp) would be most beneficial for the girls we serve at Sabina Primary School. There were hurdles in the beginning—convincing our teachers to allow the girls to meet during a time normally reserved for study, starting the weekly meetings on time and motivating the girls to actively participate—all of which initially left Amy a bit frustrated.

Against all odds, Amy persevered as she saw the club's buy-in increasing and the girls beginning to open up week after week. Amy created a dynamic curriculum for the girls and also asked them what



**Our Peace Corps volunteer and Club GLOW founder – Amy Wilson (center)– with some Club GLOW members.**

topics they would like to discuss. The positive changes in the girls' attitude and demeanor have been exciting for Amy to witness. Now, once skeptical teachers have shared with Amy how impressed they are with the girls who actively participate in Club GLOW saying how they now speak up in class and have become leaders around the primary school campus.

Watching the girls blossom into confident young women has been particularly gratifying for Amy—since in the beginning many were too shy to even look one another in the eye. However, once the ice was broken, the girls began opening up about the issues that face all young ladies, including changes in their bodies, safety, self-confidence and self-esteem. The dedication of the girls to keep Club GLOW going and growing has also been inspiring for Amy. The girls have now assumed leadership roles, as they continue to encourage and work with each other.

Their enthusiasm has even piqued the interest of our boys who are hoping to start an empowerment club of their own.

Amy is grateful she persisted over the past year and is proud of the girls' accomplishments in such a short time. We are also proud of Amy and our girls for forging the way for young women to become the future leaders of Uganda.



**Left: All hands on deck as the girls design the Club GLOW banner. Above: Two of our girls proudly displaying the Club GLOW banner.**

## DEVELOPING VIRTUES

In the beginning of 2009, a group of students from Developing Virtues Secondary School in California were inspired to help children in Africa. They formed a group called WIN which stands for What's Important Now. This is their story.

My name is Alisha and I go to Developing Virtues Secondary School in California. Together with my friends Christine, Samie and Jasmine, we were determined to help others. Our inspiration came from watching documentaries and films in class, including *Invisible Children*, *Turtles Can Fly*, *The Rivers* and many others. Actually, our class was planning to do something charitable, but it just never came together. However, after watching *The Rivers* in particular we just couldn't stand the feeling of uselessness. So, within a week, we started a blog, made fliers, wrote a letter to a California Congressman, hosted a bake sale at our local natural food store and planned a presentation. Unfortunately, we didn't sell many of our goodies, but we did receive \$364 in donations! We then began to research organizations in Africa that we might help. Many worthy organizations were recommended, but we really wanted one that helped vulnerable children and that's why we chose Children of Uganda.

After our presentation, we received another \$200. We felt so fulfilled that we had raised a total of \$600 from our own efforts. Our principal wanted us to donate the money to a needy girl since we



attend an all girls school and we believe girls have a harder time getting an education. Meanwhile, another student group called One World Youth Project was so inspired by our success—they began selling t-shirts to help raise money and also sponsor a girl in Uganda. Now our school is sponsoring two COU girls and we are so excited!

In the future we plan to organize more projects and host more presentations to raise money. We hope that our determination will spread and inspire others to help. Sometimes we don't realize how lucky we are. People are starving across the globe, while many of us are wasting food at every meal. Realizing this has really made an impact on our lives and we hope on those reading this article—because when we think about it – this is truly What's Important Now!

## RICO'S STORY

Recently I was sitting in the courtyard at Sabina Primary Boarding School, as a cooling breeze carried the sound of laughing children walking back to the dormitories. With my evening tea in hand, I watched this daily migration and felt utterly content with my place in the world. I don't want to give you the wrong idea; this scene is not always so idyllic. Sometimes, mixed in with the happy chatter, are arguments and shouts of disagreement. Yet, this particular evening was especially joyful because beside me were two of the sweetest kids I've ever known: Rashida, aged five, and Kato, aged six. Rashida is shy and giggly, while Kato always has a huge smile, which is made even cuter by the lack of his two front teeth. Happily eating their dinner of posho and beans, they stopped between mouthfuls to give me a Luganda lesson. Learning the word for "spoon," I sat next to my two little friends and knew that this would remain one of the happiest moments of my life. It was everything I hoped for, and not all what I expected, when I left for Africa.

Countless times in the months before my departure, people asked why I was going to Uganda. The truth is that my reasons were never precise. From a young age I wondered why, if there were so many problems in Africa, people didn't just go there and help. As time went on, I felt an inexplicable need to fill this void.

In 2006, I decided to volunteer in Africa for a year, but most of the organizations advertising for volunteers seemed more interested in giving people an experience, rather than sending people who could be of service. Although frustrating, the search process gave me time for research and soul searching, which led me to the conclusion that I wanted to work with AIDS orphans. After two years I nearly gave up, but then I discovered an organization called Children of Uganda (COU). I sent off an email, and the next day I received an enthusiastic reply from COU's Executive Director asking me to call her so we could discuss what I wanted to do. Nervously I dialed the number, and was greeted by Pamela, a person as encouraging, welcoming and enthusiastic as

you could hope for. Finally, I had found my Ugandan home!

In the six months between my decision to go to Sabina and my departure, I read everything I could about Uganda, AIDS, and African orphans, and ultimately formed some images in my mind. I pictured an orphanage full of kids who had been dropped off by their parents, sick and alone. I imagined the children would be sad, hungry for adult interaction, and clamoring for attention. The reality was very different. The large majority seemed content, independent and many had relatives that they lived with during the holidays. Clearly, the children had adapted to their environment and most did not seem desperate for attention.

I was overjoyed to see the children doing so well, but knew that there was still something I could contribute. Not being a doctor, engineer or carpenter, I initially struggled to find my place; however, I knew there was one thing I could do well and that was to teach ESL (English as a Second Language). Initially, I taught English four times a week, as well as a physical education class. It was definitely a challenge and everything seemed to result in disaster, or simply never got off the ground. Fortunately, things began to change.

As I began to adjust to my surroundings, I also made friends with the children and staff who would lift my spirits when I was down. With more successes in the classroom, my roles and responsibilities grew.

We have just finished exams and results indicate that the children have been paying attention in class, despite outward appearances! Next term I will take on even more responsibilities: tutoring four children in reading, re-creating and supervising a play space for the small children's toys, and teaching an extra period of English. I'm still not sure what my biggest contribution will be at the end of my year here, but I hope that I can be a source of strength and love to these remarkable children. No matter what happens I know that I'll cherish many beautiful moments like the evening shared with Rashida and Kato.



**Top photo: "Uncle Rico" capturing a Kodak moment with two of our children. Bottom photo: "Everyone smiles in the same language"**



# NYERO CHRISTOPHER—SOMEONE WHO ALWAYS PLACES HIS FOOT WHERE IT IS MEANT TO BE!

By Kim Glasgow and Clive Mullett

It's hard to overlook Nyero's dignified 6 ft. 5 in. frame! And, undoubtedly, his presence has been deeply felt and appreciated as a major contributor to the Sabina Permaculture Food and Water Security Project since it began in August 2008.

Born into a prominent farming family in Gulu, Northern Uganda, it's no surprise that Nyero has a natural green thumb. His older brothers, Justin and Robert, are also successful farmers. The importance of animals and agriculture in Nyero's world view is evident, as he explains: "At home we have farm animals such as goats, cattle, and even dogs for guarding the place. We also have poultry birds such as ducks, hens, turkeys, and doves. The crops we grow are millet, sorghum, sim sim, peanuts, rice, sunflowers, pigeon peas, cassava, sugar cane, and sweet potatoes."

Nyero's Father, Belentino Kolo, was head of all district farmers prior to the devastating years of the Northern War. The conflict plagued Nyero's family—killing his stepmother, one brother, and a sister-in-law, as well as leaving his brother Justin with a gunshot wound. Today, thankfully, Gulu is experiencing peace and a challenging period of reconstruction. Nyero is able to visit his surviving family every year at Christmas and says (with a big smile on his face), "Gulu is ok, it is good today."

During this time of Northern turmoil, Nyero came into the COU organization. He spent his primary school years at Kiwanga and is currently enrolled at Mbuye Farm School. His skill and enduring perseverance has been observed by a number of instructors. For example, one day Kim and a student were struggling to achieve the desired shape for a raised vegetable bed. Nyero watched quietly for a while and then asked us to step aside. While we stood around talking, Nyero tranquilly shaped the garden using a hoe with amazing precision. It felt as though we were watching an artist perfecting his painting. And while the poor quality building nails have Clive defeated, Nyero can patiently and expertly hammer them into the hardest of wood. Yes, patience is a recurring theme with Nyero and one of his most frequent sayings to Kim and Clive is "be patient, Jjaja" (always said kindly!).

From the very beginning, Nyero found his place in the Permaculture

program: "On my first day of helping Dan and Amanda at the project I made for them a simple trench bridge to be used for children to pass over and to pass over wheelbarrows during work. The bridge was successfully made. From that day up 'til now, Permaculture is my brother and building is my sister and I will continue with them." Nyero's future plans include studying architecture and permaculture; however, for the time being, he is looking forward to participating in the Permaculture Design Course which will be offered in January 2010 at the Sabina School. He will also be helping to maintain the vegetable gardens at Sabina over the Christmas holidays, receiving a stipend as a volunteer.



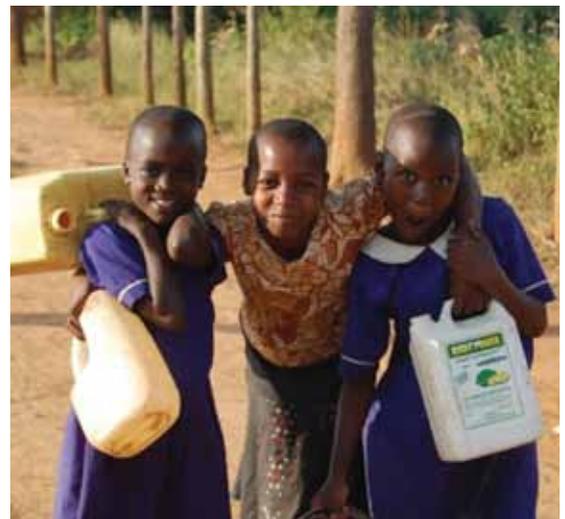
**Jan Smart (longtime COU volunteer and Board Vice-Chair) with our beloved Christopher Nyero in a light-hearted moment.**



**Clive Mullett (who spent a year on the ground with his wife Kim helping expand our Permaculture program) with a contemplative Nyero.**

Something that amazed us when we first came to Uganda was how the locals walk confidently at night without any form of lighting. On one moonless night, Nyero walked us home. When we asked him "how come you don't step into a hole and fall over when you're walking around at night?" Nyero replied seriously "because I always place my foot where it is meant to be." After spending time with Nyero Christopher, one gets a sense that now, and in the future, Nyero will always place his foot where it is meant to be—in his usual humble and assured way.

Thank you, Nyero, for walking alongside us this year, for showing us where to place our feet and for saving us from many unnecessary stumbles.



# CAMP U CAN

In May 2009, Frances Bajdik-Bova and her friend Megan visited Sabina Primary Boarding School after spending a semester studying in Africa. One of our supporters recommended that Frances visit our school before returning home to Canada. Frances had a life-changing experience and shares her reflections and an exciting new project she is initiating with a little help from her friends.

*"I am envious of the man who has not yet stepped foot on African soil for the greatest adventure of his life still lies before him"*  
—Author Unknown

When Megan and I first arrived at Sabina Primary School we really weren't sure what to expect and had very mixed emotions. Personally, I was excited, a bit nervous of the unknown, and eager to get to know the children at the home. This was my opportunity to live absorbed in a new culture, to teach Ugandan kids and try to leave a positive impact. This reality was a bit overwhelming and it was an experience I'd been waiting for as long as I can remember.



**Frances learned many lessons during her volunteer teaching stint at Sabina Primary Boarding School.**



**Smiles are contagious at Sabina Primary Boarding School—as evidenced by Frances and her new friend.**

I cannot describe how wonderful it was to step onto the Sabina grounds my first day and be greeted by a mob of smiling faces. Immediately, I felt welcome and immersed in a wonderful, happy home. Within minutes of arriving, we had ditched our bags and started an impromptu game of Octopus. All of our years as camp counselors came to life and we spent that afternoon playing games, singing songs, and laughing. There would be many more afternoons just like this. Exhausted by the end of the day, we crawled into bed excited about the weeks to come.

On our first Monday at Sabina, we walked over to the school and were assigned the classes we would be teaching for the next 4 weeks. Having studied education, I

was really eager for the challenges I knew awaited me. It was an incredible opportunity to stand at the front of a class of 40 students with a chalk board and just teach. I hope this is an opportunity many other educators will get to experience as it really opened my eyes. Thinking on your feet and working with limited resources has taken on a whole new meaning for me.

Throughout our weeks teaching, we had some great successes and some definite challenges. Our lessons ranged from alphabet puppet shows to rugby themed gym classes. When we weren't teaching, we spent our time playing with the kids and organizing small projects to benefit the children and the home as a whole (for example a mini first

aid course). The relationships we made both with children and staff alike will last a lifetime and have imprinted my heart in ways I never could have imagined.

I've been home for about 4 months now and there is not a day I don't think about the people at Sabina. My whole life has been changed as a result of the month I spent there. Africa is no longer a world away or a collection of stereotyped images. Uganda is now home to many friends and the place of countless memories. In May of 2010 I will be returning to facilitate a summer camp called CAMP U CAN for the kids at the home. I will be bringing over a team of 6 Canadian university students to help make it happen. I can't wait to get back to Uganda and share the experience with others. The camp will run 3 weeks, and will be completely funded on donations and fundraising initiatives generated by those facilitating the project.



**Frances getting another lesson—how to wash clothes the old-fashioned way.**

Specific activities taking place at camp will vary greatly and will be finalized as the group of volunteers collaborates in the coming weeks. The entire team will be involved in the activity planning and we will build on the strengths and talents of those facilitating the camp. Examples of activities include sports, leadership activities, art and drama, dance, life skills,

science, as well as outdoor education. The inspiration comes from my own positive experience at camps, which provide opportunities for kids to develop self esteem and experience something new outside of the classroom. If you would like to learn more about this camp initiative, please feel free to contact Children of Uganda.



# THERE ARE A NUMBER OF WAYS TO BRIGHTEN OUR CHILDREN'S WORLD

Here are a few:

1. **Sponsor a child** (\$984 per year or \$82 per month for secondary children; \$504 per year or \$42 per month for primary children).
2. Donate safely and securely online at **www.childrenofuganda.org**.
3. Go to **www.goodsearch.com** and designate Children of Uganda as your charity of choice. Use them to search and shop online. Every search and purchase raises money for our children.
4. **Text UGANDA to 50555**. \$5 will be donated to us and charged to your mobile phone bill.
5. **Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)—designate Children of Uganda (CFC # 11638)** in your annual giving through the federal campaign.
6. Many **employers sponsor matching gift programs** and will match any charitable contributions made by their employees. To find out if your company has a matching gift policy, please contact your employer's Human Resources department.
7. Walk! Run! Bike! **Create your own fundraising page for Children of Uganda** at **www.firstgiving.com** and invite your friends and family to help support your efforts.
8. **Donate to the Sister Rose Scholarship Fund** and give hope to an unsponsored child.
9. Having a birthday? Getting married? Milestone Anniversary? **Designate Children of Uganda to receive donations** in your honor in lieu of presents.
10. Are you an **eBay** user? List your auction items, choose a percentage to donate and designate Children of Uganda to receive the donation.

**YES, please use my gift right away to support Uganda's most vulnerable children.**

Donor Name (Please print) \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed a check or money order in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please charge my credit card in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

To make your secure donation online, please visit **www.childrenofuganda.org**

Will you consider an extra \$5 donation this month? Simply **text UGANDA to 50555**.

Your \$5 donation will be applied to your mobile phone bill.

# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



**"If the only prayer you ever said in your whole life was, "thank you," that would suffice."**

—Meister Eckhart

For many years, I have kept a daily gratitude journal. My gratitude lists remind me how truly blessed I am even after the most challenging days. As 2009 draws to a close—I am filled with enormous gratitude for the many people who make up the

COU family, who continue to empower our beloved children and for those who have dedicated their lives over the past year to making an even bigger difference.

*So here's my COU-inspired gratitude list for 2009:*

1. **Our children's letters:** I simply love reading the hundreds of letters each year from the children written to their sponsors thanking them for their support. Recently, one letter in particular touched my heart. A young girl named Jessica expressed her excitement of being a part of Club GLOW (a self-esteem club for girls). And as a result of her increased self-confidence—she shared with her sponsor that she truly believed she could achieve anything!

2. **Sponsors:** Each year our amazing sponsors enable us to care for the hundreds of children in our program. Frequently I will hear from sponsors expressing how their sponsorship experience has dramatically changed their lives. Some of you have been with us since our beginning as founding Board members and are our most ardent supporters. Your loyalty and love have sustained COU through the good times and the lean times.

3. **Volunteers:** Each year people travel from all over the world to volunteer with our children. Whether they spend a week, a month or even a year—their lives are forever changed by a little piece of heaven on earth known as the Sabina Primary Boarding School. Our volunteers have seen firsthand the work we are doing on the ground and how so little can go so far in helping our children feel safe, loved and joyous.

4. **Food and Water Security:** Thanks to a dedicated and generous Board member—our Food and Water Security (FWS) program now provides the children a diverse, fresh selection of produce with their meals and access to safe drinking water all year long.

5. **Sister Rose:** I'm so grateful I met this remarkable woman in her prime. She had a gentle yet enthusiastic manner about her and I was immediately drawn to her remarkable spirit. She clearly had one primary purpose in life—to serve as many vulnerable children as possible. Our children adored Sister Rose and were deeply affected by her passing. We will be forever grateful to her.

This list is far from exhaustive but definitely captures much of the gratitude I have from 2009. And remarkably, 2010 will usher in our 15th year of service. I wish you and your loved ones a new year filled with tremendous joy, health and prosperity.

And one more thing—Thank You!

**Pamela Brannon**  
Executive Director

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**Claire Johnson-Fay**

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**Pamela Brannon**

Executive Director [pamela@childrenofuganda.org](mailto:pamela@childrenofuganda.org)

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**The mission of Children of Uganda is to support and empower hundreds of orphans and vulnerable children to lead successful and productive lives. Our vision is that all children in Uganda receive an education to become healthy, productive members of their community who assume leadership roles and positively impact Ugandan society.**

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