

## Immaculate's Story

Our special anniversary feature, *15 stories for 15 years*, begins with Immaculate, who joined our program at the beginning of 2010. Board member and former Peace Corp volunteer, Sarah Cowan, shares her remarkable story:

"The day Deborah, Sabina's Home Administrator, went to pick up Immaculate, she was found wearing a torn, dirty dress with no underwear or shoes. When asked where her clothes and school supplies were, Immaculate said that the tattered dress was all she owned.

5-year-old Immaculate comes from a child-headed family. She was referred to Children of Uganda by an organization currently assisting her 16 year old brother – who became head of the family after both parents died three years ago. When the board approved adding 15 new primary students to COU's program, Immaculate was fortunately chosen to attend Sabina.

Students are required to bring 24 notebooks, pencils, pens, soap, toothpaste, a toothbrush, shoes and clothes on their first day of school. When Immaculate's kindhearted neighbors heard that she would be attending Sabina, they collectively raised enough to buy 12 notebooks. Deborah personally purchased a pair of school shoes for Immaculate; although, she immediately took them off exclaiming how she preferred to walk barefoot.



**Joyful Immaculate is all smiles in her new pink dress and shoes.**

Seeing how miserable and hungry the small child looked, they decided to take her in the school truck to get something to eat. This was Immaculate's first time in a vehicle, so naturally she was curious. Looking outside, she innocently asked, "Why are the trees walking?" With a smile, Deborah explained how the car was moving to create this illusion. Deborah then bought her ice cream. As it touched her hand, startled by the new feeling, she threw it out exclaiming that it was too cold to eat.

When they arrived at Sabina, she was excited and nervous because there were so many children. She had never been in such a place. Another COU employee bought her a dress to wear and a visitor gave her a donation of shoes, stockings and clothes. Immaculate had never owned more than two dresses, so she was overjoyed with the gifts.

As time went on, Deborah asked her how she felt about Sabina. She said, "I love the place, but I miss my brother." Deborah contacted her brother to come visit. For boarding schools in Uganda, there is a once-a-term visiting day where all the families and guardians can visit their students. Relatives traditionally prepare a large meal to share with their child. When the day came, her brother was only able to provide a small piece of sugar cane



**Our newest recruits: Brian Sempijja, Immaculate Margaret Nakazibwe and Ntwasi Joseph Wasswa.**

and 100 shillings (the equivalent of 4 cents), but Immaculate could not have been happier.

Immaculate is now thriving at Sabina. She is receiving her basic necessities of life, including food, clothes, shelter, and education; but perhaps most importantly, she has found love and friendship among the staff, dorm mothers and her fellow students. We recently asked Immaculate again if she liked Sabina and she replied with a resounding, "YES!" When asked why she loved Sabina so much, she replied, "Kubanga, wano nsoobola kulya buli lunaku. (Because here I can eat food every day.)"

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# Tribute to Patricia Davies

By Jan Smart, COU Vice Chair

As Chief of the World Bank's Annual Conference Division, Pat was invited to participate in a program that gave World Bank managers time to reflect on the organization's work – specifically, in countries where the World Bank strives to fulfill its vision of a “world without poverty.”

Pat chose to spend her time at Children of Uganda's Sabina Primary School in the rural Rakai District of Uganda - hit earliest and hardest by the AIDS pandemic.

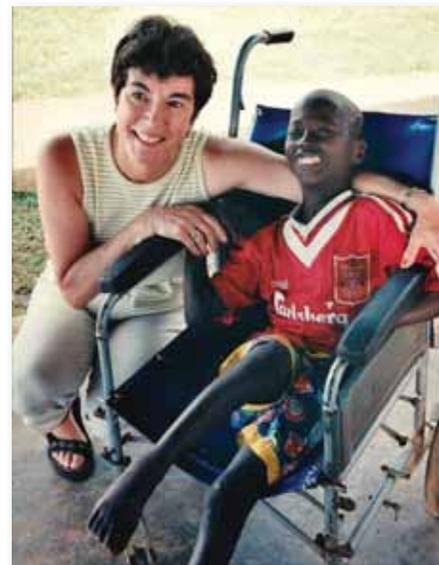
As all our volunteers will testify, the first time spent living within our school community is life-changing. And so it was for Pat, who quickly became involved in our programs, joined our Board and stepped up to the position of Board Chair in 2007.

Pat's engagement with our children and

staff has never faltered. As a Board Member and Chair her commitment to COU's fiduciary responsibility, both as a fundraiser and overseer of COU's programs, has been unflagging. Pat has been with COU through our cycles of growth and prosperity, guiding the organization through challenges with her personal attributes of integrity, passion, and commitment.

We thank Pat for setting such a high bar for the Board of COU in the years ahead. We know that Pat, as a COU Board alumnus, will continue to challenge us to live up to the expectations of our children, Board, staff, and donors.

Bless you Pat in the years ahead and thank you for your example of love, service, and compassion.



Pat with her sponsored child Charles.

# My Hero and My Friend

By Mary Beth Ray, GPC Committee Chair

When I think of my dear friend Pat Davies, many words come to mind: kind, dedicated, smart, warm, sincere, creative, reliable, stylish, fun....well, you get the idea. But one trait sets her head and shoulders above most, and that is her generosity. Pat gives tirelessly of her time, her talent and her resources - and for that we are truly thankful.

I met Pat several years ago at Georgetown Presbyterian Church. I had a crazy idea to put together a musical fundraiser which had never been done at our church. A mutual friend said, “I don't know if that can be done, but you should talk to Pat Davies, because she could really make it happen.” Pat's dark eyes sparkled at the mention of the concept, and she immediately brainstormed logistics—the date, the place, the musical talent, the guest list, the price, and the menu.

*Music for Mission* was born in November 2007, and our first effort netted \$30,000, with half the proceeds going to Children of Uganda. Again with Pat leading the charge, we held a second *Music for Mission* in April 2009 with our net exceeding \$43,000. Pat cheerfully undertook every

aspect of the event, even while managing a World Bank conference in Africa!

Pat's link to COU was far more than financial. She helped members of our church connect with God's children in Uganda. She brought the beautiful COU children to Washington twice, and they performed their spectacular and inspirational song and dance at our church. She worked with John and Emma Marshall, and Elizabeth Fitchjian, to coordinate a GPC book drive, yielding hundreds of new books for Sabina's library. She and Jan Smart spoke to our Adult Education class several times, sharing stories and pictures of Philip's House, the permaculture garden and daily life at the orphanage. She introduced us to Bob and Jane, whom we have proudly sponsored for several years. And finally, after over a year of planning, Pat helped launch our church's first mission trip in 230 years!

Sending our 17-year old daughters off to Uganda pushed our parenting skills to the test, but knowing that Pat would be there guiding them provided the reassurance we needed to “let go”. Our girls returned with a new perspective on the world. Not only



do they realize their very great fortune, but they appreciate the Ugandan children for their faith and the joy they feel despite their struggles.

As a Deacon, Pat has reached out to our Washington, DC community to share her time and talent with the under-served closer to home. She volunteers at Martha's Table and Miriam's Kitchen. She organizes assembly of over 200 backpacks and Easter baskets for needy kids and helps coordinate and cook for the homeless shelter hosted by our church every February. On top of all this, she hosts the most elegant and tasty dinner parties in Washington!

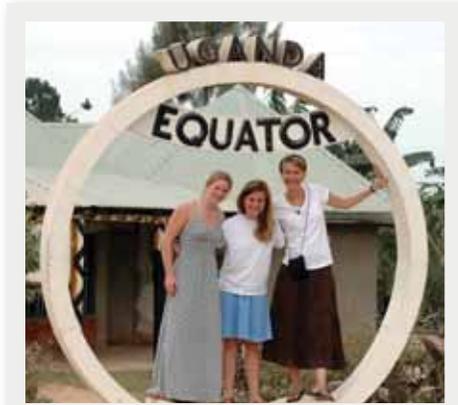
I'm already realizing how many things I've forgotten to say; but in short, Pat is a gift from God and we are truly grateful. We wish Pat, and COU, many more years of happiness and success!

**“A special thanks goes to our supporters and friends who donated to the Pat Davies Education Fund – a one-time honorary matching gift drive that raised over \$7,000.”**

# Georgetown Presbyterian Church's Mission Trip: Snapshots Of Uganda



Alice Bell and Betsy Ray arrive in Uganda to discover a stack of books donated by and shipped from GPC.



Kara VanderKamp and the girls stop at the equator - a must see for all new Ugandan travelers!



Alice meets a group of our primary girls on their way to class.



Alice and Betsy lead a reading lesson in Sabina's library and resource center - made possible by GPC's kind donations.



Betsy and Alice have fun teaching the children a new game - or is it the other way around?



Immaculate (our cover girl!) finds a new friend in Alice.



Our kids want to extend a special thank you for all the time and resources GPC has donated - especially soccer balls!



On their last night in Kampala, the girls have dinner with Pat Davies and Kara.

# A New Perspective

By Maria White

My daughter Ciara saw pictures and heard countless stories of her brother Celso's trip to Uganda two years ago; nevertheless, she was incredibly nervous to pull the plug on technology (no computer, cell phone or t.v.) for our three week stay in Uganda. It took her a while to detach from my hip and begin bonding with the kids who had already been clinging to her for days.

One little girl in particular named Vivian had recently lost her father and brother. Every night she would come to Ciara sobbing, "Aunty Ciara, I am just so sad about what happened to my dad and brother. How do I get rid of this sadness?"

Ciara shared how difficult it was to offer words of wisdom or advice to Vivian, because nothing she said could take away the pain. The next day, Vivian came to me for guidance. I asked her if I could pray with her and she nodded yes. For twenty minutes I showered her with prayer. From that moment on, it was as though a great weight had been lifted. She never again approached us for help; although, Ciara did continue to mentor her.

Many of the young girls looked up to Ciara as a role model, which was a new and gratifying experience for her. Ultimately, the decision to disconnect from the modern world gave her the opportunity to make lasting human connections.

Ciara and I also travelled to Blessed Sacrament Kimanya to visit my brother's sponsored children, Steven and Faith. We arrived at the secondary school unannounced, so when Faith first saw us she said, "I know you, but I can't really believe that you are here." Her reaction was one of quiet disbelief.

I brought school supplies and asked if they wanted anything else. Steven immediately started rattling off textbooks and tools that he needed. Faith, on the other hand, modestly asked for one notebook. I insisted that there must be more that she needed, but to no avail.

It's not Faith's personality to ask for help. When I first met her, she was a community student and not yet enrolled in Children of Uganda's program. At the time, she was sharing a bed with her friend – without sheets or mosquito nets. I instantly became her advocate and was able to secure her sponsorship with my brother's support.

It had been two years since we last saw one another, so I didn't expect her to confide in me; and yet, there was a definite sadness about her. Something inside told me to return.

A few days later, we showed up again unannounced. Faith was surprised, but happy to see us. I told her that I thought there were other items she needed, but perhaps did not feel comfortable asking for the first time. The school gave us permission to take Faith shopping for notebooks, chemistry and physics textbooks, soap, and powder.

As we were shopping, Faith timidly asked if she could have one pair of underwear. I said, "Faith, there are seven days in a week – please take as many as you'd like." She then said in Lugandan "God is so good. I haven't seen Aunty Maria in years and she came out of nowhere to help me." It was amazing to see the outpouring of appreciation for something so small as undergarments.

In American society, we are surrounded by an abundance of wealth and luxuries that are rarely appreciated; yet, there are chil-



Ciara White with the girls she mentored.



Maria White, sponsor and volunteer.

dren at Sabina who can fit their entire life's possessions in a small metal container and are so overly grateful for what they have. Visiting Uganda is invaluable as a donor because it grants you a firsthand understanding of how your contributions are making an immediate impact. When a five year walks up to me and says "Thank you for making my home beautiful," I can't help but want to give back even more. Consequently, when asked why I should continue to give my time, energy and resources to Children of Uganda, I find it more difficult to think of a reason why not to.

## Madeline's Blog

Maria and Ciara White were accompanied by another mother-daughter duo: Angela and Madeline Smith. Madeline chronicled her experiences in Uganda through an ongoing blog – most notably, she reflects on the bond she made with one of our girls named Jannet who wrote a touching goodbye letter:

*Dear Aunt Madline,  
How are you now days?  
Are you okey on my side I am okey.  
I will miss you when you leave us.  
I thank you for being kind to me.  
I thank you for your love you have shown me.  
I thank you for bringing your friend Colby to see us at Sabina.  
I thank you for your painting.  
I am so, so, so, sad for your leaving!!!  
I thank all you have done for us at Sabina.  
My best colour is purple.  
My best subject is maths.  
I wish you a safe journey  
From,  
Jannet Kirabi  
I love you*



Madeline and her mother, Angela Smith – long-time donor and former board member – making beaded necklaces.

Read more from Madeline's travels at <http://madelineinuganda.blogspot.com/>

# Empowerment Through Play - Camp U Can Update

In the last issue, Frances Bajdik-Bova introduced a brand new initiative called CAMP U CAN. Here she is again to update us on the camp's success:

"Thanks to a generous outpouring of support from family, friends and COU supporters, we were able to run our first ever CAMP U CAN on the grounds of Kiwanga (home to our Phillip's House children). Together we fundraised, applied for grants, collected donations for supplies and created an appropriate camp curriculum focused on "empowerment through play." In the end, I was accompanied by five female volunteers. When we arrived, there were close to 50 kids eager to get started.

Monday through Friday, the children participated in arts and crafts, sports, drama, music, outdoor education, science experiments, and field trips. Each day began with a warm-up activity, which included songs, a game of Simon Says or a Scavenger Hunt. Activities were then divided into a series of blocks where students chose between two activities, such as Friendship bracelet making, Hide and Go Seek or Capture the Flag.

After lunch, the children would participate in one final culminating activity; for example, a parachute session, small group games on the soccer field or bingo. One day we held a Talent Show

where the children rehearsed dance and drumming routines to be performed before judges – *American Idol* style.

Every day, the children would ask excitedly "What are we doing next?" We were concerned that the older children would be less enthused with camp; however, to our surprise, they were equally engaged and positive about the activities.

Their big planned field trip to the zoo was surprisingly overshadowed by a visit to the airport. None of the children had ever seen an airplane land or take off, so they were extremely excited and in awe. We bought them cokes and sat in the lounge for an hour just watching the planes. Throughout camp – and perhaps even still today – the kids couldn't stop talking about the airport.

When we finally arrived at the zoo, the children were granted a "Behind the Scenes" pass to feed the animals, pet a rhino (which many were terrified of), watch the veterinarians in action, and embark on a safari excursion. The Phillip's House children and young adults were especially thrilled about the zoo. I will never forget the giant smiles plastered on their faces that day.

As our finale to camp, we held a birthday party for a sponsored child named Resty. Every year her sponsor hosts a celebration on her birthday, but this year all the kids at camp were invited to participate. We set up a piñata, held a dance, made birthday cards and crafts, and then ate a special meal with birthday cake. Afterwards, we announced camp awards.

It has been gratifying to witness the transformative process of having a vision and watching it come to life. I had this moment when we were flying to Uganda when I looked over to see the five people traveling with me – who may have never dreamed of going to Africa before Camp U Can – and realized the impact of this amazing project.

Plans are already underway for next year. My goal is to run a larger camp at Kiwanga, as well as introduce a formal camp in Rwanda where I conducted a mini-camp this past summer."



Frances with smiling Camp U Can participants



# 15 Stories for 15 Years: Faces of Our Future

*In honor of our 15<sup>th</sup> year of service, we are focusing on the young lives Children of Uganda has served. Immaculate's story is both heartbreaking and inspiring; and yet, it is not unique. Over the years, our sponsors, donors and volunteers have helped hundreds of children overcome unimaginable odds. You've made these stories possible.*

## Brian

**Name:** Brian Sempijja

**Grade Level:** P1, St. Kizito Primary School

**Achievement:** New recruit

Five-year-old Brian is one of the youngest children we have at Sabina. His father died when he was just a few months old, so his mother and ailing grandmother were unable to afford his basic needs. When he was recruited at the beginning of this year, he was very timid and lonely. Today, he is a happy, friendly boy who loves his studies and making new friends.



## Ntwasi

**Name:** Ntwasi Joseph Wasswa

**Grade Level:** P1, St. Kizito Primary School

**Achievement:** New recruit

Joseph's father died of HIV/AIDS in 2008. His mother works as a tailor, but is HIV infected and in poor health. Joseph dreams of becoming a pilot when he grows up so that he can travel in the air. He loves playing football with his friends. He is happy to be in school unlike his sisters and brothers who did not get a chance.



## Shillah

**Name:** Shillah Najuma

**Grade Level:** P6, St. Kizito Primary School

**Achievement:** Trainee for the 2011 Tour of Light

Shillah was enrolled in 2004 after the disappearance of her father. She lives in a one room rental with her mother who mends people's clothes to earn a living. Shillah wants to become a respected doctor so that she can help people who are sick. Before COU, she had no hope of going to school. She is grateful for the opportunity to receive a quality education.



## Hilda

**Name:** Hilda Kyabaggu

**Grade Level:** P6, St. Kizito Primary School

**Achievement:** Talented musician

Hilda's parents died of AIDS when she was only four years old. She was brought to COU by her maternal grandmother in 2005. She is able to cope with the death of her parents because at school students share their stories and experiences about being an orphan, which helps her to not feel alone. Hilda is one of the smartest girls in her class. She is also currently involved in the Music, Dance and Drama Club at Sabina and one day hopes to become a professional musician.



## Godfrey

**Name:** Godfrey Mugisha

**Grade Level:** P6, St. Kizito Primary School

**Achievement:** 2010 recruit recommended by teachers for his intelligence and passion for learning

After the death of my dad, I sat at home for one year because my family could not pay school fees. I thank Aunt Deborah and Uncle Willy (COU employees) who helped me to join the Children of Uganda. Thanks to Children of Uganda, I have all my school requirements and other needs provided. You helped me and my family in all our problems. You are really my parents.



## Antonia

**Name:** Antonia Kisakye

**Grade Level:** P1, St. Kizito Primary School

**Achievement:** Music prefect and vice president of Club GLOW

My parents either died or had to abandon me, so I was a very little baby when Sister Rose took me into her care. She gave me the name Kisakye which means, "God's Mercy". I am a music prefect and the vice president of Club Glow. As a music prefect, I organize the students when it is time for dancing and singing and help them to perform in the best way. Club Glow is a Girls Empowerment Club at our school, which teaches girls to make well informed and powerful decisions about their lives. Children of Uganda has provided me with a good education, clothing, food and shelter. I am grateful for all of this! Thank you everyone who has done something to help me survive.



## Abbey

**Name:** Abbey Mugerwa

**Grade Level:** S2, St. Cyprian High School

**Achievement:** Top of his class in the last examination

My father died when I was only 10 years old. In 2006, a serious disease attacked my grandmother. The disease went on despite praying for her. My sisters did not get a chance to attend secondary school because my family could not afford school fees. My other young relatives are in the poor village schools. I am the third born and only one who has a bright future ahead thanks to the help of the Children of Uganda organization. I am now in S2 and working so hard to pass my exams. I pray that God may help me become a doctor, accountant or an engineer.



## Jude

**Name:** Jude Male

**Grade Level:** S2, St. John's Senior Secondary School

**Achievement:** Trainee for the 2011 Tour of Light

I was only twelve when I realized that I had to act as a real man. I remember by that time I had only two items of clothing: a shirt and one pair of shorts. Life was very tough until Aunt Rose took me to Sabina. I will never forget the day I first went to school and entered P2 at 9 years old. I did not know how to speak, write or read English. Many of the children were laughing at me, which made me hate school. In time, I learned English and had the best handwriting in my class. I wonder how God does His things. After passing my first year, I never wanted to leave school. Children of Uganda has helped me grow up into a hardworking, young man.



## Jane

**Name:** Jane Nanfuka

**Grade Level:** S4, Mbuye Farm School

**Achievement:** Trainee for the 2011 *Tour of Light*

My mother died when I was still very young, so I do not have memories of her. I am grateful to COU because they gave me a home when my mother died and my father could not afford to take care of me. Most vulnerable children do not get a chance to acquire a good education, but COU is helping me achieve my dream of becoming a nurse. I am studying hard because I want to help sick people.



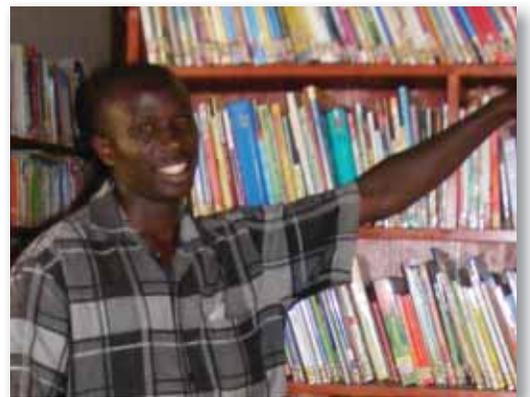
## Mathias

**Name:** Mathias Mulumbu Kigozi

**Grade Level:** S6 graduate

**Achievement:** Employed as Sabina's Resource Center librarian

I really thank the entire staff of Children of Uganda that has nurtured me since my parents passed away. While I was in school I was an academic prefect, sanitary prefect, and the hostel prefect at Kabale Ssanje. At Kako Secondary School, I became president of the Red Cross Kako Link, a branch of Red Cross international, as well as the music Director at Kako Catholic Community. I am currently working at Sabina Primary School as the librarian and dorm father for the bigger boys. Long live Children of Uganda, we love you.



## Mike

**Name:** Mike Yiga

**University:** Makerere University

**Degree:** Bachelors in Urban Planning

**Achievement:** Pursuing a two year course in certified financial services

Mr. and Mrs. Andy Keech, you picked me up, showed me parental love, cared for me and guided me and you have really given me a reason to live. It's certainly hard to imagine that my early days of sorrow could turn into joy and I could be so happy the way I am today! COU has paved the way for me. I will keep the fire burning for COU and am dreaming of reaching out to a child in the world who is less advantaged, just like Mr. and Mrs. Andy Keech and COU did for me. I very much hope to make a difference at least in one child's life to make the world a better place.



## Rose

**Name:** Rose Namazzi

**Status:** COU graduate

**Achievement:** Employed at Serona Hotel, Kyotera

I joined Sabina in 1997 as a P3 student after my parents died of HIV/AIDS in 1996. When my sister and I joined Sabina, we were so happy to find Aunt Nalongo (a COU employee) who treated us like her children. After successfully passing my primary and ordinary levels, I joined an institution where I achieved a certificate in Catering and Hotel Management. I am currently training through a hotel diploma course.



## Rose

**Name:** Rose Nalwoga

**University:** Makerere Institute for Social Development

**Degree:** Diploma in social work and social administration

**Achievement:** Intern counselor at the TASO Masaka (AIDS Support Organization)

It's not easy to find people with the hearts of Sheila and Jimmy Lee Jenkins in the world of today. They have cared and shown me the parental love that a child would need from his or her parents. I am what I am today because of you, mum and dad! I am really so proud of you and of Children of Uganda for helping so many children like myself.



## Winnie

**Name:** Winnie Nakalembe

**University:** Mukono University

**Degree:** Bachelors in Social Work and Social Administration

**Achievement:** Employed as Sabina's junior social worker

Thanks to COU, I successfully passed my primary, ordinary and advanced levels of learning. Great thanks go to my dearest sponsors, Jeanne and Daniel, who enabled me to attend university for three years while pursuing a Bachelors degree in Social Work and Social Administration at Mukono University in Uganda. May the almighty bless their golden hearts. I don't regret my past. It's hard to heal the emotional wounds of a poor Ugandan child, but COU has ended my suffering. Through good education and discipline, I have been transformed emotionally, physically and spiritually into a healthy, successful young lady.



## Program Director, Margaret Kasakende

Sixteen years ago, when I was organizing the baptismal party for our youngest daughter, we were looking around for entertainment. I remembered a nun who I had seen several times in Kampala travelling with a group of orphans that she had taken in from the streets. At a church service I happened to attend, these same children performed.

The nun, our late Sister Rose Muyinza, informed us that she took care of orphaned children under an organization called Daughters of Charity. Through music, dance and drama, they raised funds to purchase food, shelter and medical care. I decided to visit her office to see if the children would be willing to perform at my daughter's celebration and to also contribute to Sister Rose's noble cause. They danced and sang so well that we referred them to many other friends.

Little did I know then, that one day I would be associated with Daughters of Charity - our faithful partners in taking care of Ugandan orphans and vulnerable children.

I joined Children of Uganda on May 6, 2008

after having worked for a number of organizations, including the Delegation of the European Commission where I worked for 23 years.



**Margaret Kasakende with her husband, four children and grandson.**

When I first joined Children of Uganda, I visited the guardians of an orphan in our program. In the homestead that we visited, the crumbling mud and wattle house had just two very small rooms. The auntie and uncle were surviving on one meal a day. They slept on a mat on the hard ground. To add to this misery, the uncle was very sick. A short time after, we learned that he died and that the owners of the property were threatening to send the auntie away from the small piece of land that she had.

Without Children of Uganda's support, it is difficult to imagine where this child would be today. Fortunately, he is very happy because Children of Uganda has enabled him to go to school, have decent meals and clothing. There are many more children living in vulnerable situations; but, thanks to all our donors and well-wishers, we can continue to transform lives.

# COU's 2011 *Tour of Light* Shines on...

When asked why she would like to perform on the tour, 13-year-old Stella Akello replied, "to share Ugandans' joy with the world."

Audiences who have witnessed these young people dancing are overwhelmed by the sheer joy and exuberance that radiates from every fiber of their being. Pounding on the drums together in polyphony, which can only be understood by the greatest of musicians, the boys create the life force of the dance. Moving in time, hips swaying to the drum beats, the girls' smiles uplift and inspire people of all ages and walks of life. From the heart of the so-called "dark continent," the COU dance troupe shines the true light of Uganda.

Despite losing one or both parents to disease or extreme poverty, their message is far from dark and depressing. The 2011 *Tour of Light* will feature song and dance centered on traditional folk tales or proverbs from around Uganda. True to the joking culture of the Baganda people, many songs will be humorous in nature. Drums, song and dance are used in a plethora of ways, including: welcoming visitors, celebrating weddings, rounding up school spirit and rejoicing in spiritual services.



In addition to celebrating their beautiful heritage of song and dance with American audiences, the performers will share their powerful life experiences – proving that, with a good attitude and positive sense of humor, you can overcome anything.

All of the children on tour were raised in what we call a "broken home," but they do not have broken spirits. Aside from the tour trainers, none of the children have travelled outside of Africa – the majority of which have never left Uganda. During the August tour training, the children were overjoyed with the thought of coming to America. This opportunity will give them a sense of pride in their country, increase their cultural awareness and instill the belief that they can achieve their dreams.

You can help turn Stella's dream into a reality with a contribution to the 2011 *Tour of Light*. Together, we can give these incredible students a platform to share their message of hope!

## SPOTLIGHT: Reflections from our Tour Committee

### Sarah Cowan

After living in Uganda for two years as a Peace Corp volunteer and watching the children sing and dance on numerous occasions, I still get excited to see them perform every time. This summer, I had the opportunity to travel back to Uganda with a group of friends who were also astounded by their talent. One of my classically trained friends was amazed by the harmonies the children were able to sing. My only explanation for her was that this is due to the students' hard-working spirit and passionate love of music. The children constantly inspire me to become a better musician and person.



### Talitha Phillips

My first experience with Children of Uganda was at my family's church, Broadway Presbyterian, where the children performed many times. As a young girl myself, I remember being deeply impressed and felt an immediate connection to the kids. These early impressions remained with me through college

and when I returned in 2004 to see them perform, I knew that I wanted to volunteer in Uganda. Still uncertain of my career or life path after college, I took the first opportunity I could to live in Uganda and immerse myself in their unique culture. As a 2006 tour chaperone, I also had the fortune of witnessing their first experiences and discoveries in a new culture. In particular, I remember the children's excitement when they rode an escalator for the first time. It gave me a new set of eyes for America.





## How You Can Help



**As a monthly sustainer, your contributions will build a steady base of support we can depend on.**

In recognition of our 15th year of service, you can pledge **\$15** a month today in support of our life-saving services. Each month, you can have your donation come easily and directly from your checking account or credit card.

Your small gift can purchase one week's worth of food for three children, three pairs of new school shoes or mosquito nets to help prevent malaria.

Unable to commit to a monthly gift? Donate **\$25, \$50** or **\$100** to the **Sister Rose Education Fund** – to help close our budget gap due to covering the cost of school fees for over 50 unsponsored secondary students.

Call (800)531-9612 to set up your monthly EFT payment schedule or make a secure donation online at [www.childrenofuganda.org](http://www.childrenofuganda.org). Please write "monthly sustainer" in the memo box at check-out.

**Thank you for your generosity and compassion.**



# Message From Our Founding Board Chair



Sixteen years ago, I met Francis and fell in love. It is a journey that changed my heart. I remember our first encounter – those deep, soulful eyes set in a jet black cherub face, the corners of which were drawn up in an infectious smile. It didn't matter that he was only four years old and lived on the other

side of the world. I followed that maiden dance tour like a moth drawn to a flame as they danced their way into hearts and homes across San Antonio.

The following summer, I traveled to Uganda with my good friend and founder, Alexis Hefley. I toured the abandoned home that Sister Rose Muyinza expropriated when she began taking in street children during Idi Amin's brutal regime – children that had lost parents to AIDS, war and extreme poverty. Back then, children filled every room and the overflow slept outside under make-shift tarps in case of rain. I ate at the restaurant that Sister Rose opened to bring in money for her charity. Always resourceful, she also had a catering business and a children's dance troupe to entertain at weddings and the like – she had a full service enterprise, quite the entrepreneur! She was a woman that never took "No" for an answer. At newer facilities, provided in part by our fundraising efforts, where the children had beds and blankets of their own, I met Moses. Moses had a festering sore on his leg and I, in-

credulous that no one had attended it, doctored it. Afterwards, he came to me daily for a new bandage and love – a hug, a smile, or a compliment on his soccer skills from a knowledgeable admirer.

In 2003, I went on a mission trip to the orphanage with my family's church, Christ Episcopal. Once there, my heart was stolen by a new group of children – the children of Philip's House, a home within Children of Uganda's program for mentally and physically handicapped children. They greeted me daily with bear hugs from those that could walk and ear to ear grins from those who couldn't. There was Isabella, Henry, Edith and Charles. I sat for hours listening to their sometimes incoherent stories as they showed me how to bead, stitch and weave crafts that could then be sold to help with their support. At their feet, I learned what I had learned from every other child I had had the privilege to know and fall in love with in the orphanage – possessions do not equal happiness and joy comes from within!

My journey with Children of Uganda has been a journey of the heart in which I received more than I gave. I learned that having nothing is not where the story ends for these children but where it begins. In the midst of their brokenness, joy breaks through buoyed by a strong faith in God and an indomitable spirit of hope!

Sincerely,  
Catherine Easley

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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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