

## School for AIDS orphans needs help from Hoosiers

### Funds raised will buy sewing machines for school in Nyaka, Uganda

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While working as a volunteer intern last summer at the Nyaka AIDS Orphans School in Uganda, Daniel Tritch noticed that an 8-year-old boy often arrived at school a half-hour late.

"He was a very good student, but the teacher would yell at him in the local language for being late," said Tritch, an Indiana University senior. "Finally, I asked the teacher what he was saying to the boy."

The teacher said he'd been telling the youngster he needed to get an earlier start on his 7.5-mile trek to school. The boy had been waiting until 5:30 a.m. to leave his home.

"It impressed me that this little kid was walking 15 miles a day to get to and from school," he said. "That was on top of his homework and the chores his guardians had him do at home."

Tritch, who spent nearly eight weeks as a second-grade teaching assistant at the school, will talk about his experiences at the third annual Nyaka Benefit Banquet at 6 p.m. Nov. 4 at Terry's Westbury Banquet Center in Bloomington.

The banquet also will include a brief program by Twesigye Jackson Kaguri, a former Bloomington resident who founded the school in 2003 with his wife, Beronda Montgomery.

#### Kids cherish education

Tritch was overwhelmed with how much the students appreciate their education.

"There are more than 2 million AIDS orphans in Uganda, so they realize how fortunate they are to be in a good school," he said.

Tritch said on several occasions he observed the students' behavior when their teacher had to leave the room for 15 to 20 minutes.

"They would sit quietly in their seats and not fight or throw stuff," he said. "It was unbelievable how well behaved they were."

One day, Tritch was approached by a boy from the village who told him his mom had died of AIDS.

"He asked if I could get him in the school," he said. "I asked the headmaster, and he said there simply was not enough room in the school to accept all AIDS orphans."



Students sing a song in a Primary 2 classroom at the Nyaka AIDS Orphans School in Uganda. Indiana University student Daniel Tritch will speak at a Nov. 4 banquet to raise funds for the school, where he interned last summer. The school was founded by former Bloomington resident Twesigye Jackson Kaguri, who will also speak at the banquet. Courtesy photo

### **Feeding the mind and belly**

Tritch said the 150 students at the school appreciate not only what goes into their heads, but what fills their stomachs.

"The kids get a better meal at the Nyaka school than they would at the government schools - by far," he said. "At the government schools, you see lots of malnourished kids with pot bellies. The kids at Nyaka are amazingly healthy."

He said Nyaka students receive a lunch featuring bountiful portions of mashed bananas, red beans and corn. They also get a morning snack of popcorn or fried bread.

"The kids also get free medicine for things like malaria," he said.

### **Need more textbooks**

Thanks to generous donors in Bloomington and other parts of the country, Tritch said, the students have desks, notebooks and pencils - and the floors are concrete rather than dirt.

"The one thing they're short on is textbooks," he said. "There are about eight books for every 30 students, so they sit in groups of three and share the books."

He said his second graders study English, religion, social studies and math - and play soccer, duck-duck goose or steal-the-bacon during physical education.

### **Touching goodbye**

Tritch said when it came time to return to the States, he and several other student interns arose at 6 a.m. and began driving down a road to the airport.

"We came upon 20 students who had formed a human roadblock," he said. "They jumped into our van and kissed us goodbye. It was very moving."

As the students were giving him goodbye pecks, he promised them he would return to the school within two years.

"My time at Nyaka was life changing," he said. "I now know for sure that working with Africans is what I want to do with the rest of my life."

After he gets his bachelor's degree in finance, accounting and African studies, Tritch may go to graduate school to study nonprofit management.

"I don't know if I will end up working with AIDS orphans or fighting for human rights issues or what," he said. "But I will be doing something for the African people."

### **How funds will be used**

Organizers of the event hope \$10,000 will be raised, which would be used by the school's board of directors to buy five sewing machines for vocational training, license and maintain a mini-van, and support the construction of a school kitchen.

The banquet is being sponsored by the Indiana Friends of Nyaka, which educates Hoosier communities about the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa and elicits support for the school.

By the time the school presents its first graduating class in 2008, it expects to be providing free education and health care to 210 orphans.

### **Help the school**

**What:** Benefit banquet and silent auction to benefit Nyaka AIDS Orphans School. The silent auction will feature Ugandan art and crafts - such as fabric art, traditional garments and pottery.

**When:** 6 p.m. Nov. 4.

**Where:** Terry's Westbury Banquet Center in Bloomington.

**Speakers:** Twesigye Kaguri and Daniel Tritch.

**Tickets:** \$25 each. Tickets can be reserved - no later than Oct. 28 - by calling 332-1850, or writing to Indiana Friends of Nyaka, 1701 E. Second St., Bloomington, IN 47401.

**Web site:** [www.nyakaschool.org](http://www.nyakaschool.org).

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Intern Daniel Tritch and a Primary 2 student named Brian pose in a classroom at the Nyaka school in Uganda. Both of Brian's parents died from AIDS. Courtesy photo