

Nyaka Notes

A Project of STSAD, Inc. / www.nyakaschool.org (517) 402 - 2787

Nyaka's Mission - "To provide quality, free education and extracurricular activities, both formal and informal, to children who have been orphaned due to HIV/AIDS as a means to counteract pervasive hunger, poverty and systemic deprivation"

September 2006

Volume 5, Issue 2



Special Interest Articles:

- Nyaka Corner
- Bruno's story
- Nyaka highlights
- Nyaka book

Stephen Lewis Foundation whose mission among others is *to assist orphans and other AIDS-affected children, in every possible way, from the payment of school fees to the provision of food* have provided more funds for 2006 supply of educational materials, Nyaka Anti-AIDS Club and General support through their HIV/AIDS awareness program.

www.stephenlewisfoundation.org

Indiana Friends of Nyaka cordially invite you to the 3rd Annual Nyaka Benefit Dinner on Nov. 4th at Terry's in Bloomington, IN

Nyaka Corner - Nyaka Grandmothers Participate in the Toronto Grannies Meeting

Two Nyaka grannies took the long journey from Nyakagyezi to Toronto in August to be part of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Gathering hosted and fully funded by the Stephen Lewis Foundation, which has supported Nyaka School in the last two years. The gathering united 120 grandmothers from the foundation's many projects in 11 African nations (Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) and 200 Canadian grandmothers.

This meeting was organized in an effort to mobilize and offer support to the grandmothers in Africa who have lost their children to HIV/AIDS and are now taking care of their grandchildren. The meeting offered the African grandmothers a forum where they could speak about their experiences living with the impacts of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the Canadian grandmothers the opportunity to meet the African women first hand and discuss ways of organizing and raising awareness and funds to assist them.

The Nyaka grannies have been involved with Nyaka School since its inception. Freda Byaburakirya, a retired teacher living in the village, was the school's headmistress for its first years and teaches Primary 1. Leonarda Ndazororera is a retired teacher who cares for three of the school's orphans. Both she and her husband have been active participants in the Nyaka program,

being part of the school's oversight committee and donating bricks for construction. The grannies were accompanied by Christine Turyasingura, a member of the school's operating board living in Uganda. The weekend event began with singing and dancing, uniting the 320 grannies of different cultures and languages.

After opening speeches, the women attended meetings and workshops to help them deal with grief, supporting their grandchildren and the stigma of AIDS. The conference ended with a demonstration of solidarity. Singing and chanting, more than 300 grannies marched with colorful banners along the streets of Toronto to the CBC Conference Center, where the 16th International AIDS conference would open the next day. They gathered in the atrium to hear speeches by Alicia Keys, Elton John and several U.N. officials, including Stephen Lewis.

Many grannies told their stories and Freda gathered her courage to speak at the event in her native language, Rukiga. Twesigye Jackson translated as she spoke: "As Jesus came to the world to save us, Stephen Lewis has opened his heart to Africa and saved the children and grannies. He is our savior and on behalf of all the grannies here, in Uganda and in all of Africa who did not come, I would like to thank the foundation, Ilana the director, and Stephen Lewis our savior."

Continued on pg. 3



Bruno - A Student at Nyaka
By Lucy Steinitz



I wanted to visit the home of one of the Nyaka pupils in order to gain a better understanding of the contrast between home and school. The nursing assistant suggested that I visit Ankunda Bruno, age 14 in P4/Grade 4. To look at Bruno, you would think he is about nine or ten. His teacher describes him as quiet but attentive in school, and he performs very well. I suggested walking to Bruno's home so I could get feel what this is like for him to walk to and from school each day; but this would have entailed climbing up and down two small mountains over rough terrain (3.6 km each way) and the Headmaster wisely suggested we drive.

In former years, Bruno's father had been quite a well-to-do local farmer. He had a banana plantation (field) and grew several crops. He also owned quite a few cattle and goats, and lived in a fairly large and well-built compound near to a natural spring. But Bruno's father died six years ago and two years later his mother died and after that, also his grandfather and finally his aunt, who had lived in the compound, as well. That just left Bruno and his two older brothers. Then, if this wasn't enough tragedy, an uncle grabbed some of the property and took Bruno's oldest brother to mind his store at night. Bruno's middle brother was also pulled away in order to look after Bruno great grandmother who is very frail though these two brothers still have frequent contact. This means that Bruno lives alone.

I can't explain how shocked I was by this. In all the years that I have visited poor homesteads, even child-headed households, I have never seen a child having to live all by himself, day after day. There are not even any neighbors close by. Just a part-time porter who sometimes hangs around and watches over the last of Bruno's inheritance – three goats and one cow (that he shares with his brothers). You have to try to imagine this: the compound sits atop a hill, out of earshot of the neighbors. It contains four buildings, three of which are abandoned. There are some garden plants that Bruno tries to maintain, and a field of sad-looking banana trees off to one side. But otherwise, there is nothing. No people, no pets, no company, no protection. No paraffin lanterns or even a candle for light after dark. No food in the kitchen except for some bananas and a few mangos. And just one small boy, trying to make it alone day by day.

The driver and I had bought some oil, sugar, bread, and soap by way of a small donation. After I was invited inside (the house is relatively substantial, but dirty and uncared for), I sat down with Bruno and told him how brave I thought he was to be living on his own like a grown-up. "But it must be very hard," I offered. Personally, I can't imagine how he copes with the loneliness. "What is most difficult for you?" I asked gently. "The nights," Bruno answered softly. "Do you have bad dreams?" I asked. "Yes." "And what do you do, to make the bad dreams go away?" "I practice my homework in my head," Bruno said. (I have to say, in the time that has passed since I heard Bruno say this, I simply can't get it out of my head. I keep thinking about him, and about the impact of Nyaka school on this child – his only thread of hope over and over again.

Nyaka Corner Continued...Nyaka Grannies in Toronto

During the gathering, the grandmothers read The Toronto Statement, which would be presented at the International AIDS Conference. It stated that the women were resilient, strong and determined. "We grandmothers deserve hope," it read. "Our children, like all children, deserve a future. We will not raise children for the grave." See the entire statement and other details of the Toronto Grannies meeting at (<http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org/AugustGrandmothersGathering.htm>). The Nyaka grannies' trip to Toronto was an experience of a lifetime, a journey they would never forget. They not only attended the conference, they toured the city and were exposed to strange traditions such as eating raw vegetable salads and keeping dogs as pets. They were fearful of elevator rides and being housed on the 11th floor, and were disgusted by the skimpy clothing the local young girls wore. They were not impressed by sandwiches, but did like spicy KFC chicken. Most importantly, they returned home with a feeling of hope that their story was being told to the world and they were not alone in dealing with the tragic loss HIV/AIDS was leaving in its wake.



Nyaka grannies Freda Byaburakirya (left) and Leonarda Ndazororera (2nd from right) and project representative Christine Turyasingura (right) with Stephen Lewis.

Nyaka Book Nears Completion – T. Jackson Kaguri and Susan Linville

Undoubtedly, some of you have heard that there is a book being written about Nyaka School. Last year, Susan Linville, PhD and I began co-writing an 18 chapter book on the building of Nyaka School. Susan has published over a dozen short stories, written newspaper articles and science articles for children and adults, and is currently writing and publishing a newsletter at her place of employment at Indiana University. Last October, she traveled to Uganda with me to visit the school and meet the teachers and students. This memoir, of my early years in Nyakagyezi and my subsequent return to build the school, is nearing completion and will be sent to Susan's agent by the end of this year.

We will keep you updated on the status of the book as it is completed and enters the publication process. Part of the proceeds from this book will go towards building the first community library in Nyaka village a revolutionary idea in Uganda. To give you a peek, ***here is an excerpt from the first chapter of the book:***

"A boy growing up in a farming community in southwestern Uganda doesn't dream of flying on airplanes and traveling halfway around the world. He doesn't dream of becoming someone who will help educate hundreds of orphans and change the lives of everyone in an entire community. Yet, when I looked from the boy I once was to the man I had become, I found I was dreaming those dreams and making them a reality. In five short years, with the help of my wife and others, I had nearly completed building Nyaka AIDS Orphan's School in my home village of Nyakagyezi and had already provided 118 orphans with family homes and a first rate education. God's invisible hand had guided my destiny; protecting me and nudging me forward when I was afraid, and at one point even saving my life. But I still remained the doubting Thomas, worrying about continued funding and the kids' welfare. With an estimated 5,000 AIDS orphans in Kanungu District alone, the mission of providing for only ten percent of that total was a daunting task. The fear that I might fail was a looming darkness that only prayer could keep at bay."

Nyaka AIDS Orphan School

P.O. Box 339
East Lansing, MI
48826

Phone:
(517) 402-2787
tjk@nyakaschool.org

We depend upon the
kindness and
support of
individuals like you.
Please send tax-
deductible donations
to Nyaka School
(STSAD) at
P.O. Box 339
East Lansing, MI
48826

*For our
children's sake*

We're on the Web!

See us at
www.nyakaschool.org

Program and Activities Highlights from May to October 2006

- Five Volunteer Interns joined Nyaka for two months, four from USA and one from Norway
- In May, a one-day in-house Teachers and Volunteers training workshop was conducted
- One student died due HIV/AIDS after she was given basic treatment. She was rushed to the nearest hospital and admitted for 2 days before she died
- A Nyaka School Van was acquired and is helping to transport sick kids to each the hospital and the Nyaka Anti-AIDS club to other schools in the community
- On rented land, a number of crops are grown. These include tomatoes, onions, beans, and sweet potatoes. The harvest will supplement feeding kids at school
- 16 chicken are being reared to supplement the school feeding program
- Two-roomed office for the head Teacher and Staff room was completed
- Two latrines were completed – one for boys and one for girls
- Construction of the guesthouse started and is ongoing expected to be completed by October 2006
- The headmaster and one teacher attended a microfinance training workshop to enable Nyaka to support foster families of the Nyaka Orphans
- **All students at Nyaka were tested for HIV/AIDS and only one student was positive and is already on medication. Two medical students, Matt and Harriet from St Georges Hospital Medical School, London UK, participated in this exercise and spend all of August at Nyaka and Kambuga hospital.**

Recent and Upcoming Events Calendar

Oct 10th: Eastminister Presbyterian Church, East Lansing, MI
Nov 4th: Indiana Friends of Nyaka Third Annual Dinner, Bloomington, IN
Nov 22nd: Nyaka site visit
Dec 1st: World AIDS Day

To arrange a presentation about Nyaka please contact Jackson at tjk@nyakaschool.org or (517) 402-2787

The Nyaka School/STSAD, Inc.
P.O. Box 339
East Lansing, MI 48826

