

HOCW Newsletter

Winter/Spring 2013

Welcome!

2012 was a big year for HOCW and we couldn't be more excited to see what 2013 will bring! We want to take this opportunity to thank all of our volunteers, donors, sponsors, and supporters for making the work we do possible. In 2012 we had a total of 23 volunteers work with us in Ndejje. We are particularly proud that two of those volunteers returned for second visit and 12 were referred by previous volunteers. We welcomed high school students, retirees and everything in between. The HOCW community benefitted from the skills of teachers, artists, musicians, social workers, mental health professionals, and many more. Twelve of our volunteers were students- in addition to the hard work they did while in Uganda we love the idea that some of their experiences working with refugees in Uganda might influence their future careers.

Financial stability

HOCW has grown a lot over the past two years and so has our budget! We are working to increase our financial stability in a few ways. First, we applied for and were accepted for fiscal sponsorship with Visions Made Viable, a US organization that specializes in the support and incubation of young non-profits. This new relationship will allow donors and volunteers who pay US taxes to deduct their donations (including the cost of flights to volunteer in Uganda. hint! hint!). It also allows HOCW to apply for grants that require applicants to have a US federal tax ID. HOCW initiated this process based on feedback from volunteers.

HOCW also applied to be a Global Giving partner, Global Giving is a US non-profit that partners with international NGOs to provide technical assistance and fundraising support. So, be on the lookout for information about our first Global Giving challenge in April! Many thanks to volunteer extraordinaire, Chelsi Bullard for overseeing the application process!

Child Education and Welfare

Lack of primary school education is one of the biggest challenges facing the families we serve. Uganda's public education program is growing, but there is still no government-funded primary school in the village of Ndejje. The reality for our families is that if they can't afford to pay school fees at a private school, their children cannot go to school. This has so many negative consequences in our community; we see the consequences of the lack of access to education in everything we do. It is something HOCW has been working to address since our inception.



HOCW students at Holy Angels School

We are proud that we have found sponsors for 25 children. But, there will always be more children than HOCW can find sponsors for. So, HOCW is working on some long-term solutions. We have begun work with UNHCR to attempt to identify potential schools which might be willing to welcome additional members of our refugee community. We are also planning to build a small computer lab and purchase curricula that can be used by both children and adults.



Eager students crowded around one desktop computer

Changing our Community!

Corporal punishment is a big issue in our village and the whole of Uganda. It has always been HOCW's policy not to use any physical means of punishment and we have worked hard to send children to schools where corporal punishment is less common, we have not been able to find a school that does not ever hit kids. In 2013, one of our priorities is to work to change this paradigm. We are working with Raising Voices, an internationally recognized NGO based in Kampala that implements programs focused on the prevention of child abuse. In May 2013, raising Voices will conduct a week-long training for HOCW staff as well as headmasters and teachers from three local schools that HOCW children attend. Raising Voices uses a train the trainer model so our staff and all those who attend will then be able to train others in their community. This training is made possible by a generous gift, honoring Megan Ricke's retirement, made by her colleagues.

HOCW Community Collective

The Community Collective epitomizes HOCW's mission. The collective members provide support and community for each other while learning a trade and supporting their families. Hopefully the new skills they learn will break the cycle of poverty, allowing their children to attend school and have access to better healthcare and nutrition.

In the past, the collective has been for women only, but the men wanted in! So, our collective has been re-structured over the past month and has been newly christened the Community Collective. The collective's shop has since been cleaned, painted, and re-organized to function as a classroom as well.



A collective member inside the shop/classroom

The members have met to establish a schedule for the members to come together outside of class. Scheduling is always difficult as time is precious and when it rains everything stops, but despite the challenges a class schedule was drawn up today at their second meeting with many new members teaching classes and a different member opening the shop every day to instill the idea that it belongs to all of them equally. At the first meeting the women came up with their goals for the collective, which have been written into a mission statement--their first product from working all together!



A view of the classroom/shop with its new sign

A graduate from HOCW's business class has joined the collective and is working with them to find the most cost-effective designs for their prototypes and to calculate how much to save to buy new materials. Once the designs have been drawn up the collective will have their first products to go out and find markets for, each with a hand embroidered tag made by the new embroidery class.

Partnerships

The needs of the community HOCW serves are myriad. We have found that sometimes the best way to find the resources that our community needs is through partnering with other organizations. Our staff and learners alike have benefitted from these partnerships. We'd like to take the opportunity to highlight two of these partnerships.

Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, Chicago, IL USA

This partnership took root nearly two years ago when two medical students from Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science (RFUMS) began planning a trip to come work with us for three weeks over the summer and has been growing ever

since. In October, Dean Inis Bardella, MD, FAAFP came to stay with us- she met with our students, visited the communities they live in, and toured our partner health center. Since her visit, we have signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding with RFUMS and are excited about the many ways our community will benefit from this partnership.



4th year med students, Su and Stephani, with HOCW staff

Finish Refugee Council

HOCW and the Finish Refugee Council (FRC) have been working together for about a year. They provided our teachers with trainings and our students with scholastic materials such as books, notebooks and writing implements. The first group of fifteen students completed a business class taught by FRC staff at HOCW. As a final project they are charged with working together to develop a business plan which FRC will fund up to 1 million schillings (about 400 USD). The second cohort of students is now taking the business class.

Volunteer Highlights

Our new volunteer, Chelsi Bullard, who joined us in January 2013 is currently offering Beginner Spanish and Vinyasa Yoga classes to interested students. The classes are going well and students are excited to learn new subjects and skills.



Chelsi teaching in our make-shift yoga studio

In January, two volunteers from Bennington College in Vermont, USA came to work with us in Uganda. Sarah Fetterman and Grace Pease spent their five weeks working in our partner clinic, organizing and helping with the collective, teaching art classes,



HOCW children wearing masks they made in art class

and helping in any way they could. Even our African staff was impressed with their resourcefulness!



Sarah and Grace making a chalkboard from charcoal and potato leaves...who knew?