

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"

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Nyaka Corner - December 2006 Site Visit

By Twesigye Jackson Kaguri

It is always refreshing, reassuring, and wonderful to get back to Nyaka. Each year since Nyaka's inception I have visited to see the progress so as to continue being accountable to all stakeholders in Uganda (our beneficiaries) and around the world (our donors). You can call it our internal audit. I spend time with students, teachers, volunteers and community members. I visit student's homes and also hold a one-day workshop for teachers on different subject each year. This year I focused on teamwork.

On these visits I also visit my parents, my sisters, nieces, and nephews who live in different parts of Uganda. It is like a reunion of some sorts that is much needed after spending a year apart on different continents. In 2002, I visited Nyaka with Dale Val. In 2003, my wife Beronda and my son Nicolas joined me. In 2004 I visited with Marcia Middel and in 2005 with Susan Linville who is working with me on a book about Nyaka. On this trip, I had my son Nicolas, Beronda, her sister Rene and her brother and pastor of Led Church, Al joined me on a visit in December. Every person who has visited Nyaka will tell you that he or she did not know what to expect. Though there are still so many children orphaned, poor and destitute, the ones in our school are happy, cared for, loved, and

their dreams of becoming responsible citizens are alive.

Once you visit Nyaka "Your life will never be the same" Deborah Delmer from New York said after her visit in 2005. Lucy Steinitz called it a "First Class Project." More than 10 interns who have served at Nyaka since 2004 all agree and so have more than 20 other visitors from USA, Canada, Japan, Norway, Togo, Ghana, South Africa, and me.

In 2007, visitors plan on going to Nyaka in February, August, and October. You can join any of those teams. Nyaka now has guesthouse with indoor shower and bathroom available at a minimum \$10 donation a night for visitors and discounted amount of \$7 for students. Proceeds are returned to Nyaka to promote self-sustainability of the project.

Each time I am at Nyaka I visit at least three families that host Nyaka kids, especially grandmothers. I have visited Matrinda, Magret, Harriet, Kabajungu, Beireta, and many others. All these are grannies raising children we have placed in their families or their own grandchildren. These grannies are within two miles radius of Nyaka School so I always visit them on my morning jog or in the evening after dinner. The grandmothers who went to Toronto in August for the Grannies Gathering have mobilized other grannies to form a support

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Foundation Support News:

For the next two years
Stephen Lewis Foundation will continue to provide funds for a supply of educational materials, staff salaries, Nyaka Anti-AIDS Club and general support .

www.stephenlewisfoundation.org

We also thank GFC for 2006 and 2007 support

www.globalfundforchildren.org

Special Upcoming Event

Our 1st Graduation is scheduled for Dec 2008. Please plan to be there if you can.

Nyaka Hits the Big Apple by Nancy Colier

Since learning of the situation with AIDS orphans in Africa, I have been deeply concerned. Specifically, about their need for an education and their right to develop their minds and lives beyond their circumstances. When I discovered Nyaka, I was immediately struck by its purpose and accessibility. Within a few days I was communicating directly with Jackson, its founder. I was inspired by Nyaka's work and also by the Kaguris' willingness to turn intention into action. These two pioneers were doing something to make a difference, as two *regular* people, without billions of dollars, without a corporation or government behind them.

Most of the New Yorkers that I know care deeply about the situation facing AIDS orphans in Africa. However, they are unsure of how to help, how to use their energy to create change. Jackson and Beronda's efforts inspired me to "just do it," to take one helping step and then another and see where it led. I think of it as lighting a match of compassion. One match illuminates the world a little bit, and also has the potential to grow into a much larger bonfire.

With this in mind, I decided to host a fundraiser for Nyaka here in my apartment in New York City. It was modest but powerful. Jennifer Thomson, a board member of Nyaka, spoke on the issues facing Africa and AIDS orphans and a Q&A session followed. People were moved by what they learned and pledged to spread the word on Nyaka. From that one small event, we raised just under \$5,000. Several people offered their business services to Nyaka and a second fundraiser was born. Soon Nyaka's voice would be heard in the suburbs of New York City.

On the evening of our second fundraiser, generously hosted by Melissa McCool in New Rochelle, New York, we had a new challenge: weather. It was a stormy evening with torrential rains. I have always heard that rain is a good luck omen, but unfortunately, not for traffic. After an hour on the road, Jenn Thomson and I were still stuck in Manhattan. True to Nyaka's message, it was time to sprout something good out of difficult soil, to work with what is and make it better. We decided to turn the car around and hurry back home so that Jenn could present her talk to the fundraiser's guests via speakerphone. What followed was a lively and passionate discussion. People were interested in the message regardless of the medium through which it came. The total fundraising for this second event is not yet determined but what is clear is that Nyaka received more exposure and more people are now aware of Nyaka's work and the tremendous need for it. With each of these small steps, our school travels a little further into the world, our fire grows a little bit stronger, and our children live in just a little bit more light.

Nyaka Corner Continued

group called "Kanungu Mukaaka's Association" while Christine, who accompanied the grannies to Canada, has also been helping the grannies in Bushenyi District and encouraging them to stay strong. She has been sharing the knowledge and training from the Toronto Meeting on how to support each other and stand strong as one force.

On this trip I visited Kyarisima Jacqueline (pictured below right) and three other students who live near Kyabu stream in Enengo, which is the gorge that you cross before the "Welcome to Kanungu" sign. The place looks impassible, but Nicolas and I were determined to hike down to visit these students who I knew for sure no other visitor would ever try to reach. Kyarisima is 15 years old, she is one of the oldest students at Nyaka; she stands out because of her age, height and shy smile. She struggled in her class and in every test in 2006. Her uncle even threatened to take her out of school if she is not promoted to P6. I spoke with her a day before I visited her home. She said "Director, you must speak to my uncle because he will not allow me to come back to school next year." I spoke with her uncle and reassured him Kyarisima is starting a tailoring class and will also join P6. She will earn vocational skills and have a better life.

We have guaranteed bright future to 156 students at Nyaka, each year more will join and their lives will be changed. No matter what happens, these children now know how to read and write, they speak good English and they have you who care, love and support them. We know that these students' lives will never be the same and for that, on behalf of all Nyaka students, and those who will be joining Nyaka in February 2007, teachers, volunteers, and the community I say thank you and *Happy New Year.*



A Visitor's Perspective as Nyaka Students went through HIV/AIDS test
by Marjorie McNamara

I am a grandmother with a gift for drawing people out in conversation. And I had no idea what I was doing at this meeting at the Kambuga Hospital. There had been an empty seat in the Landrover taking off from the Nyaka School, and having nothing to do, I had hopped in.

Though I wasn't clear about what this meeting with the hospital administrator was all about, I did know and could feel the tension in the room between the Nyaka School officials, the school nurse, the medical student volunteers and the hospital administrator who sat neatly dressed in full suit and red-striped tie behind his desk, stacked with squared-off piles of paper. He first had us each sign his guestbook, passing it around the room from one to the other of us as we circled him, our chairs pushed back against the walls. In the middle of the room, was a circle of emptiness.

I sat the closest to his desk. Perhaps because of this, I began to talk to him, about how when I signed the guest book, I happened to realize that it was my son's birthday, about how I was in Uganda visiting my daughter and her husband Bako, whom he had met that morning, and my 4 year old grandson Seba. As I talked, I watched my enunciation. In Uganda, I found excellent English, but in an accent more musical than either British or Americans speak. My daughter Bryn, living in the country for a year, had learned their accent. It lilts like a soft song, pulling words up and down hills that we in the States never see. I couldn't speak like that, but as a former ESL teacher in the States, I could enunciate when called upon. The administrator (it shows how much I know that I don't even have a name for him) commented politely that I sounded like a Brit, not an American. I gave him a mush-mouthed example of my best Americanese, no one understood a word I said, and I could feel the ice break in the middle space.

This committee from the school had come once again to the hospital to try to get permission to HIV/AIDS test the children at the Nyaka School. They had tried before and failed. The testing is available and free of charge. The medicines are available to those who test positive, also free of charge. However, AIDS has so much stigma in Uganda that the general feeling is that not testing the children preserves their dignity, lets them lead a whole life. So political and social prejudices always stand in the way of permission to test children.

Later that evening, I even had a long discussion with one of the teachers at Nyaka School. He was against the testing. "How can it be kept private, without shaming the child?" he asked. "How can they get their medicine without everyone knowing?" I told him that there would be counselors from the hospital who would talk to each child and their guardians in private. I told him that these children were innocents, not responsible for the deeds of their parents. I told him that these children had suffered enough. Nothing seemed to convince him, and this was a teacher who knew and loved these children. What would happen in the community at large? I turned to Bako, my son-in-law, hoping that he would find the magic key to unlock this man's vision. Bako asked him, "What is the point in educating these children, in opening them up, only to have them die of AIDS, young in their life?" This, the teacher understood. These children have a future, which he could guarantee by having them tested. He understood.

In the few days I had been at Nyaka School, I had come to know most of the people ringed around the walls of this hospital office. I found the atmosphere in the room relaxing and pushed into the denseness with my love of story-telling. I had sensed that the name Jackson is magic in this area of Uganda where he has initiated so much to help the people. Feeling a little brazen, I slipped in that I knew Jackson—the administrator didn't have to know that it was only for five minutes of conversation after I drove from North Carolina to Indiana, when Jackson and I had watched his son Nicolas riding big wheels with my grandson Seba. I mentioned how Jackson had promised Bako that if he made it to visit Nyaka School, his parents would kill a goat to celebrate. And how they had, even though we had arrived after 9 the night before. Jackson's father had carried the goat into the sitting room for Bako's blessing, the goat had been taken out back and

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A Visitor's Perspective continued...

killed and Bako was given the cooked liver to eat before he went to bed. And how the 2 medical students standing there had not wanted to see the goat being killed. We laughed more and I talked about Gloria, knowing I was teasing her father Sempa, the school accountant, who sat across from me in the room. We had all driven up from Kampala together, with my grandson and Sempa's daughter Gloria singing almost the whole way. In front of the classes at Nyaka School, Gloria had sung the children's favorite song about a "big fat gorilla washing his clothes." As I told stories, I realized that all of us in the room sounded connected, organized, pre-conceived, as if we had been planning this meeting for years, and not just happened together as we had. We sounded in control.

The conversation lulled. We had not even talked about AIDS testing or submitted any proposals. Without a speech or (amazingly) even a prelude, the administrator put his fingers together on his desk and asked point blank, "Could you be ready for testing this Wednesday?" We tried not to show surprise. It was happening. Then I was proud of the team from Nyaka School. The meeting was theirs now—and they were professional. The nurse had the list of students, all ready. Another man guaranteed he could contact all the guardians of the children in one day and have their signed permission for the tests and their presence there for counseling. The medical students would be on hand to help with the technical part of it. There were absolutely no barriers to having the testing take place in two days' time.

I never did figure out whether the administrator was playing a game, suggesting the testing be so soon after the meeting and expecting everyone to say, give us a week to get things ready. Then he would have an opening to withdraw his permission. But this group of men and women who love the children and love the school were ready.

Our group that had driven from Kampala had to leave Nyaka School on Tuesday, before the AIDS testing on Wednesday. But I was anxious to find out what had happened. A week later, I met Sempa in Kampala. He and his family came to the farewell party Bryn and Bako were giving. Farewell to their mother and sister Paula who were headed back to the States, farewell to themselves who would leave in another week. I immediately asked Sempa about the AIDS testing. We sat in chairs facing each other, Sempa leaning forward in his excitement so that we were almost touching heads. Only one child at the school had tested positive and that child now is on medicine. Sempa was glowing, his smile stretched across his face. The testing at the school went off without a hitch, he said. After the children were tested, many of the guardians decided to be tested as well. That was a wonderful surprise. And then, and Sempa's smile opened into laughter, the local authorities decided to extend the testing to all the other schools in Kanungu district, an unheard of thing in Uganda. I grabbed his hands, squeezed them, and pumped them up and down to congratulate him. Even in Kampala HIV/AIDS testing of schoolchildren had never been done, and none of it in Kanungu District would have been possible without the leadership of Sempa, who had got us into the hospital administrator's office and had persisted with his request for AIDS testing. So, it seems, that our chatty meeting in the western mountains of Uganda has a prayer of becoming a pilot program for the whole country.

That night, I couldn't sleep. At times in my life, I have felt a force guiding me. This was one of those moments because it couldn't have just been coincidence that all the right people had just happened to be in that office at that right moment.

*From all the students, staff and volunteers at the
Nyaka School - Best wishes for the New Year!!!!*

2005 - 2006 Year in Review

By T. Jackson Kaguri

The Nyaka family continues to grow both in supporters and the number of children that we serve. Our school has become a center of development, knowledge, hope, unity, and love for all people in Nyakagyzezi village and all surrounding areas. Our approach to assisting orphaned children is so unique that other organizations are beginning to come to study it. However, we are also embarking on learning from others in the country. Earlier in the year, our headmaster and one other teacher spent a month at Reach Out Mbuya in Kampala learning how to deal with orphans and vulnerable children, self help projects, and general administration.

In 2006 we continued free education, providing breakfast and lunch, school gardens, clean water supply for the whole community, vocational training, guest house construction, recruitment of professional teachers, staff development, providing basic healthcare, free HIV/AIDS testing for all students and some guardians, and the Nyaka Anti-AIDS Club.

As we head into 2007, we plan to continue and strengthen all of our programs, retain all of our students, and recruit 30 more students bring our student body to a total of 186. This comes with continuous support from you, foundations, churches, service clubs and many more sources as God opens more doors. People in different parts of the world are organizing themselves in "Friends of Nyaka" groups championed by our pioneer Indiana and Kampala (Uganda) groups which started in 2004. Now we have a movement in New York City (see "Nyaka Hits the Big Apple" article). Each of these groups act as a sponsor for an annual fundraising dinner. The Kampala Friends of Nyaka's contributions this year were matched shilling to shilling by Barclays Bank in Uganda. If you would like to start a chapter in your area, please let us know as the Indiana Friends of Nyaka are willing to help anyone to jumpstart a chapter in any area.



Highlights since October of 2006

- On December 5, 2006, Nyaka teachers had another one-day workshop on teamwork.
- December 11- 13 2006 Primary Five Class at Nyaka had an educational tour that took them to the following places: (1) Kampala the capital where they visited Makerere University, the Parliament, railway station, industrial area, the Bank of Uganda and the city center; (2) Jinja where they visited industrial areas, the source of the Nile, Bujjagali Falls and Owen Falls Dam; and (3) Entebbe where they visited Botanical Gardens, the zoo and Entebbe airport where they witnessed airplanes landing and taking off.
- Five sewing machines were acquired; vocational training in sewing has already started.
- A basketball court and recreation area is under construction.
- Kitchen Construction is underway.
- A new board, management committee and Guardians Teacher's Association were elected for 2007/2008 term.

Nyaka AIDS Orphan School

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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

Gratitude Journal

From the Nyaka Board Members

Five families have given more than \$10,000 since Nyaka started. 350 individuals as young as four years old and as experienced as 96 years old have supported us with gifts from their hearts. Nyaka would not be the same without all of you, your care, love and support. Many of you over the years have sent us encouraging notes, prayed for us and your prayers have worked. Several churches around the country have also supported us, from Sherwood Oaks in Bloomington which supports Nyaka monthly, UPC in Bloomington who championed Indiana Friends of Nyaka, Farmington Parish in New Mexico who collect an offering for Nyaka every Mother's Day, Led Church in Little Rock who collect an offering every fifth Sunday (Their Pastor Al Montgomery even visited Nyaka in Dec 2006), Faith Missionary Church in Martinsville, and Big Rapids SDA who also send a monthly donation. All other churches that pray and have supported us we thank you and ask for more prayers. Schools and other institutions that are involved in Nyaka in some way or the other, we also thank you. Bloomington North Rotary Club led the way and supported Nyaka first, East Lansing and Mason Rotary clubs, as a fellow Rotarian, I thank you for supporting Nyaka. Kiwanis club of Mason, we thank you for the happy bucks you gave us.

Special Notice

IN 2007, we will start a Scholarship Endowment Fund in preparation of our students joining Secondary School. 10% of all unrestricted gifts of \$100 and above will go towards this fund. We thank you.

Recent and Upcoming Events Calendar

Feb 2007 Lansing SDA Academy (Lansing, Michigan)
April 2007 University United Methodist Church (East Lansing, Michigan)
May 2007 Led Church Fundraiser (Little Rock, Arkansas)

Note: If you'd like to arrange a presentation by a Nyaka Ambassador or would like more information about Nyaka please contact Jackson at tjk@nyakaschool.org or (517) 402-2787 for more details.

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