

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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The 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 renewed our funding for the year 2006. These funds will supply educational materials, support the work of the Nyaka Anti-AIDS Club and provide general support through their HIV/AIDS awareness program.

www.stephenlewisfoundation.org

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A Visitor's Perspective – By Susan Linville

In October, I was privileged to travel with Jackson Kaguri to visit Nyaka AIDS Orphans School. The trip from Uganda's capital city, Kampala, to the village of Nyakagezi was a long one. The last stop and last paved road was in the city of Rukungiri. From there, the road turned west and became more and more rutted. Just as I thought the journey would never end, I was suddenly surprised by a breathtaking gorge covered with terraced gardens welcoming me to Kanungu District. As the sun dipped below the horizon, I found all my weariness had vanished. If ever there was Eden on Earth, I thought, this was the place.

We continued our journey to the river below and back up the opposite side of the gorge. Stars blinked into view, more stars than one could ever see at home, more stars than I thought the sky could hold. We followed the main road through Kambuga and turned onto a lane heading for the village. With no electricity, the lane was a shadowy, shrub lined path. But in the midst of the darkness, a solitary light showed ahead. It was the solar lamp mounted outside Nyaka School. It was a beacon, a light of hope for a generation of children.

It was the next day that I saw that hope lighting the faces of Nyaka's children. In the morning,

before the school's official welcoming ceremony, I heard giggles outside my guest apartment window. Word had spread and the children couldn't wait to meet the muzungu (white) visitor. I spent part of my morning meeting and greeting excited students. That afternoon at the celebration, I was an honored guest along with other visitors, including Jackson and a Japanese visitor, Aoki Mitsuo. We were treated to a traditional meal of goat meat stew, matooke (banana), potatoes, rice, beans and fruits. Afterward, the school's two choirs entertained us with welcoming, traditional and AIDS awareness songs.

The following day was Uganda's Independence Day celebration. The children were in for a special treat. They rode in the back of a truck to the district's capital city, Kanungu, singing all the way, and were part of the parade that included a local band, military units, local police, schools and women's groups. Not only did many of them get to travel outside the village for the first time, they were also treated to lunch at a local hotel. I had been in Nyakagezi only two days, and already I had seen the power of the school to completely change the lives of these children. Instead of being outcasts with no education and no hope for a future, they were part of the community.

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A Visitor's Perspective Continued...

They were happy and well fed and full of promise.

I spent a week in the village, working at the school and seeing the surrounding countryside. In that time I shook more hands and met more gracious and welcoming people than I can remember. I spoke with chairpersons, ministers, chiefs and teachers. I was introduced to many new and delicious foods. I saw the continued support the community has for Nyaka School and reputation that it is gathering. But what I most remember are the smiling faces and inquisitive looks; practicing English with a handful of students one night in my lantern lit apartment; and the words the choir sang:

*We are happy, very happy
To receive you our dear visitors
Who have come here on this occasion.
Keep on, keep on, keep on coming
And let us welcome you
Welcome to Nyaka.*

2005 Intern Report: Sarah Vaadia

Even though my time in beautiful Nyaka was so short, it left an impression for a lifetime...at least my lifetime. I never expected to receive all the things I received from one little village in Southwestern Uganda.

People, who are so welcoming, loving, interesting, lively, funny, HAPPY! They taught me, what all the new books are teaching nowadays, they taught me that it is possible and it is even enjoyable to live in the moment of RIGHT NOW! That life becomes more meaningful if you enjoy each moment as it comes, not as it was in the past or as it may become in the future! Even in the local language, Rukiga, there isn't really a past tense, the maximum to be talked about is yesterday...I know, because I got laughed at many times for my failures in my attempts to speak this wonderful language...

Yet the most amazing thing I saw there, were the kids, the kids that work so hard at home, but are ALWAYS on time for school, and are always dressed nicely, and neatly, and are always ready to roar out into a song, or dance, or laugh! They LOVE this school, they REALLY do! They are happy to be there, and most of them are full of motivation and energy! Truthfully, much more than I ever was! And that is why I believe these kids deserve a chance, because they are willing, and loving and they are so happy that for sure doing something good for them will bring just a little, at least a little more happiness to this world!! And in truth they did much more for me then I ever did or will for them...

Thank you Jackson so much, I have no words to explain how much I am grateful! Give a hug to MUKAKA (i.e. Grandmother; who is Jackson's mother), Sharoni (a friend of Sarah) and all the staff...as we say...greet your mom for me and your friends and your school of amazing children! Please send them my love!!!

(For more pictures check out the galleries at www.nyakaschool.org)



The Nyaka Corner - By Twesigye J. Kaguri

Poor children, especially orphaned children, are looked down upon, denied basic necessities and ostracized for reasons that they have little or no control over. Access to education, healthcare and vocational training is an avenue for these children to have productive futures. Although more than 4,000 children have been orphaned in Nyakagezi and surrounding villages as a result of HIV/AIDS, Nyaka remains the only tuition-free school in the Kanungu district of more than 200,000 people. In a country where tuition-free education is extremely rare, Nyaka is making education a reality for 118 orphans who would otherwise not have access to education. Furthermore, Nyaka provides nutrition and healthcare interventions, as well as vocational training for these vulnerable children. Below is the progress we have made in just three years. The best is yet to come.

Nyaka At A Glance: 2004, 2005 and 2006(projected)

	2004	2005	2006 (projected)
<i>Number of students served</i>	86	118	150
<i>Grades</i>	1-3	1-4	1-5
<i>Teachers/Staff</i>	3	5	8
<i>Uniform</i>	Dresses (girls) shirts and shorts (boys)	Added shoes and socks for all students	Full Uniform for all students
<i>Clean Water</i>	One rainwater tank for the school	Gravity water system serving the school and larger community	Expansion of water taps to more homes, community groups and schools
<i>Classrooms</i>	3 habitable classrooms	7 habitable classrooms and two-roomed teachers' offices	Build a guesthouse for interns and finish all classes and offices
<i>Benches and Desks</i>	1 class furnished	4 classes furnished	Furnish another class and offices for immediate use
<i>Healthcare</i>	None	Basic student healthcare and home visits started in June 2005	Continue basic healthcare, home visits and initiate community outreach
<i>Meals</i>	None	Provided lunch for afternoon classes	Provide a snack to all students at 10 AM and lunch for three afternoon classes

We continue to address cultural, spiritual, educational and psycho-social needs of all our students.

We have continued to depend on **volunteers** - our National team of volunteers was joined by Emma Mugisha who is the treasurer of Barclays Bank in Uganda in 2005.

In 2004, **Nyaka Anti-AIDS Choir** was able to take their message to places only within walking distance. In 2005, they reached 36 schools, 12 churches, 3 mosques and more than 12 public gatherings ranging from Women's Day, Independence Day, Labor Day and other District celebrations. During these gatherings, they distributed educational brochures in simple English and Rukiga, a local language spoken in the area.

This year we developed a teachers' training manual which will be used in an annual workshop with Nyaka teachers to ensure our students the best possible education. Importantly, Nyaka has been and continues to be a community-driven school with a wide base of local support in the community.

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

The Gratitude Journal

To all individuals, organizations, service groups and foundations that supported Nyaka we say **THANK YOU**. 2006 will be even brighter thanks to our newest supporters NetAid and Global Fund for Children. The continued support of all of our donors is making a better life possible for the children of Nyaka and indeed improving the larger community.



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*Thank you to all of you who made memorial donations in remembrance of loved ones during 2005. May you be comforted by the fact that their memories will live on through the children of Nyaka.*  
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Recent and Upcoming Events Calendar

- October** – Site visit at the Nyaka School
- October 27th** – Bloomington North Rotary Club (Susan Linville, Presenter)
- November 12th** – Friends of Nyaka Annual Benefit Dinner, Bloomington, IN
- November 13th** – Faith Missionary Church, Martinsville, IN (T. Jackson Kaguri, Presenter)
- December 1st** – World AIDS Day
- December 3rd** – World AIDS Day Presentation, Bethel SDA Church, Lansing, MI (T. Kaguri)
- December 17th** – STSAD/Nyaka Board Meeting, New York, NY

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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MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR