



NEWSLETTER

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HOPE FOR KENYA'S KIDS

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Message from the President

The political climate in Kenya has returned to normal so I was able to make my annual pilgrimage in July/August of this year.

This year's visit was very special since it was my first opportunity to visit our partners at Upendo Village following the formation of our alliance two years ago. The Village is truly a remarkable place catering to the medical needs of the entire Naivasha community. They serve approximately 5000 patients per month in their tiny clinic on the outskirts of Naivasha town. There are currently only three buildings in the compound: medical clinic, convent (home to six Assumption Sisters of Nairobi) and a meeting hall used for a variety of gatherings. Construction of an administration building is planned as soon as funds are available. This building is desperately needed to provide space for the office staff who currently conduct business in three small rooms inside the clinic.



During my visit, I was privileged to visit the homes of many of the students in our sponsorship program. We also visited several schools attended by our students and a tented camp outside town which is home to 3000 Kenyans who were displaced during the political violence of 2007. These people lost their homes, possessions and place of employment during the ethnic attacks and are struggling to provide food and water for their families with no help from the government who denies the existence of the camps.

My next trip to Kenya is planned for early September, 2010 and I invite interested parties to accompany me. I know you would be richly rewarded by the experience. We will again be visiting Upendo Village and the homes of several of our students. An extension to visit some of the game parks will be offered if there is any interest.

Sandra Fenley
President

The Sponsorship Process ~

We currently provide sponsorships to 24 students who attend school throughout central Kenya. Most of the 17 students (7 boys, 10 girls) who were recommended by Upendo Village attend schools in the Naivasha area.

Thanks to the efforts of the staff at UV, our process for evaluating new applications is much easier and has resulted in the complete elimination of administrative expenses. This means that 99% of every dollar donated goes directly to finance the education of our students. By the end of the 2010 academic year, we will only have one student who is not connected with Upendo Village.



The Village gate

All requests for sponsorship are evaluated by three people at the Village before they are submitted to us for review: Elias Kinuthia, Education Officer; Bridget Muasa, Social Worker; and Sr. Florence Muia, Executive Directress. The students' grades as well as their family circumstances are evaluated and a report is submitted to the HKK Board of Directors which includes biographical information about the student and his/her family.

Beginning next year, most of our new applications will come from students currently enrolled in an elementary school sponsorship program which was founded in 2006 by two retired school teachers in Illinois. Since these students have previously been approved by the UV staff, we will only need to review the results of

their final exam to determine which students qualify for continued financial support. The results of the exam (KCPE) are published in early February and we are expecting 8 students to advance to secondary school.

Biographies ~

Elias Kinuthia:

Elias is the Education Officer at Upendo Village and a very valuable member of the HKK family. Elias personally distributes funds to the schools at the beginning of each term and often assists the students in shopping for their school supplies.

At the end of each term, he collects grade reports from each student and sends these along with receipts for any expenditures to HKK. He keeps meticulous records and, as a result, the process of updating our books is much easier.



Elias also manages the funds for the elementary school sponsorship program with a current enrollment of 100 students. In addition to his financial duties, he counsels students who are having difficulty with school or personal issues. He is assisted in this effort by Bridget Muasa who visits the homes to provide family counseling.

Elias is 42 years young and was a science teacher before coming to Upendo Village. His teaching background is evident when you watch him interact with the students. He is currently single with a fiancée, so we are looking forward to hearing about wedding plans.

Sister Florence Muia:

Sr. Florence was born and raised in a rural village in Machakos District, Kenya. She has a diploma in Social Work from the Government Training Institute Maseno, a BA in Sociology & Anthropology from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa and a Masters Degree from Chicago's Loyola University Institute of Pastoral Studies in Pastoral Counseling.



Before founding Upendo Village in 2001, she served as an administrator in a school for hearing impaired children and also in a girls' elementary boarding school. Sr. Florence was the first nun in Kenya to venture into probation work, serving as a Probation Officer for more than eight years before proceeding to the United States for further studies.

Her awards include the following:

2004 recipient of the Rotary International's Paul Harris Fellow Award in appreciation of tangible and significant assistance given for the furtherance of better understanding and friendly relations among peoples of the worlds.

2005 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee as part of the 1000 PeaceWomen project.

2007 recipient of Loyal University Chicago's Damen Award in recognition of accomplishments in industry, leadership in the community and service to others.

Academic Day ~

At the end of every school term, the staff at Upendo Village hosts a day of celebration for all of the sponsored students and their parents or guardians. I was privileged to attend the August event.

Bridget Muasa, the staff Social Worker, opened the meeting with a talk about responsible parenting and child care. Since all of the students are either orphaned due to the AIDS pandemic or are being raised by single mothers or grandmothers currently battling HIV, these families have stresses that most of us will never experience. Most of them have little or no income and rely on Upendo Village for assistance with housing and nutritional needs.

Following Bridget's talk, several of the students recited poems they had written expressing their feelings regarding their circumstances. Other students entertained us with vocal solos or duets.



A highlight of the day was lunch served on the lawn of the compound. The food was prepared by the UV staff assisted by the mothers and students. Following lunch the students gathered in small groups to write letters of appreciation to their sponsors.

A meeting of the Photography Club is also a part of Academic Day. Disposable cameras were distributed to club members earlier in the week and the students were given some basic instruction regarding how to take interesting photographs. Their assignment for the next week was to take pictures of anything that interested them and to use the entire roll of film. The cameras were returned to the club organizers who transported them to the US for developing. The best photographs were copied for insertion into note card

frames which will be sold as a fund raiser to benefit the students and their families.

During the event, I had several opportunities to talk with our students who shared their dreams for the future. In past years when I asked a student about their career aspirations, nearly every one said 'doctor' or 'lawyer', and I am sure that is what they thought we expected. This was not the case with the Upendo Village students. They dream of becoming teachers, nurses, engineers, business men or women, secretaries and even an airline pilot.



The program ended with the presentation of gift bags to each student and communal dancing and singing which was accompanied by one of the mothers who played a ceremonial drum.

ASN Upendo Village ~

"Upendo" is the Kiswahili word for love. The place is referred to as a "village" because it reflects that we are all members of the global village linked by a common humanity. The Village is the result of a partnership between the Wheaton Franciscan community (Illinois), the Assumption Sisters of Nairobi and the Kenyan community. ASN Upendo has also partnered with the Naivasha Rotary Club and local police to provide a haven for abused women, men and children.

UV provides housing assistance, basic health care, home-based care, community education, voluntary testing and counseling. A major part of the Village work is providing nutritional supplementation and infant formula for babies born to HIV positive mothers. Without a proper diet, it is more difficult to deal with HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, typhoid and pneumonia which are prevalent throughout Kenya.

In addition to their health care and family support programs, UV has recently added income generation programs to focus on the development of broader life skills which create more opportunities for the poor in the Naivasha area. Many unemployed clients have no source of income and sometimes have large families to feed. Some cannot be employed due to their poor state of health and others lack capital to start any form of self-employment.



Micro enterprise projects provide women and children a “hand up” to care for themselves without relying on handouts. Several times each week, clients meet at the Village to participate in the craft project which produces beautifully beaded jewelry, beaded scarves and bags made from discarded plastic.

In addition, dairy goats are provided to families to enable them to start their own herd which provides milk for the family’s use as well as income from selling the surplus. The first female kid from each goat is donated to the Village to benefit another family.

ASN Upendo Village is so much more than just a health care facility. It is a true family of caring individuals striving to make life better for the people they serve. Our students benefit from this support group which provides them with the tools they need to succeed in their journey toward adulthood.

Student Profile ~

Moses Mwambushi is just completing his second year of high school. He is the sixth-born in a family of seven siblings. His father died in 2001 and his mother in 2003 from AIDS related illnesses. Following the death of the mother, the children were sent to live with their grandmother in western Kenya. Life was very hard for the family and, in 2005, an older brother

brought them back to Naivasha to live with his wife and young child. They are now living in the home Moses’ father began constructing before his death and Moses has vowed to finish the construction as a tribute to his father.



I visited Moses at his school and in the family home and was very impressed by his determination to succeed in life. In the picture above, Moses is preparing lunch for the family. His brother works during the day, so during school holidays, Moses is the primary caregiver for the younger children. He also leads the way in the evening to be sure everyone spends time on their studies.



The family kitchen

Moses hopes to attend college so he can pursue a career in business management or accounting. We are sure he will achieve his goals because, as he says, “I was born to a successful man who had determination in all that he did”.