



Partners' Progress

Pride and Joy

by Elaine Griswold

Poised, well-dressed, confident, Brian spoke to the gathering. He expressed sincere gratitude for all the support that brought him to this place in life. He has completed the certificate in Catering and Hotel Management with honors. Job opportunities abound. As Brian spoke to his former teachers and Mustard Seed classmates from 2017, I had a flashback.



In 2008, he was a skinny little boy, new to Lukaya from Rwanda. His mother was working at the guesthouse where I was staying. She worked hard to make me feel comfortable. She brought a jerry can of warm water for my bath every night and a thermos of tea for my early morning enjoyment. She tried to teach me a few phrases in Luganda (her fourth language). She was my first Rwandese friend.

Brian was having a hard time adjusting to his new school and community. No one spoke his language, the food was strange, and he didn't know anyone. Teacher Sylvia wasn't sure he would ever adjust, but George Kateregga saw something special in the boy. Within two weeks, Brian was speaking both English and

Reflections

by Dana Hiscock

Kathryn and I spent four weeks in Lukaya, joined by Elaine and Susan Harper for the last ten days. It was an affirming time,



but it seems like years ago, considering all that happened after we came home. Our teachers, students, and the balance of the TOLM/Mustard Seed staff have been dealing with the pandemic's disruptions, which are more threatening than those imposed here in the US. Before the wonders of our stay are forgotten, I want to mention a few things.

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Mustard Seed Primary School

Best in Lukaya!
2019 PLE results:
first in Lukaya;
68th in Uganda
among over 20,000 schools!

Food For survival

13 tons of maize meal
7 tons of beans
Thanks to you,
Mustard Seed families are not starving!

NEW for RPU!

- website-launch in Sept.
- logo & graphics
- technology-email & data management

Luganda and making friends. The school community had loved him into acceptance.

By the time Brian was in Mustard Seed Secondary School, he was a student leader and organized a drama club. When the club performed *The History of Mustard Seed*, Brian played the role of Professor Joseph (Griswold). He was tall like Joe, and he was able to imitate his North American English. Brian loved hanging out with the Mzungus when they visited. He absorbed language, gestures, and culture like a sponge. When our three granddaughters visited in 2016, Brian was in heaven.

Now, he is a man handing out gifts to those who helped him become who he is today:

- George Kateregga, the only father Brian ever knew
- Dana and Kathryn Hiscock, his RPU-sponsors and encouragers
- me, the first Mzungu he met when he was young and scared

Brian's gift to me was a 'house-watch' (clock). The note that he included read: "You've really been a great family to me, a great inspiration, mother, and good teacher. I will always tell it to the Nations for all that I am and what I am to become, it's all you, and I will always be proud of you, Jaja." Also, "I have a lot of happiness on my heart, but it's God who knows how grateful my heart is." He filled up a whole page with thanks, praise and love.

Brian is just one of the 30 students from his class who completed the COP program. Each has his or her own compelling story. It was a joy to see them together again and to share a delicious meal--like family.

New Experiences Aboard

Mustard Seed students look forward to being fifth-graders because of the annual study-tour to Lake Mburo National Park. Eager children gathered at the school at 6:30 a.m. to take a 2 1/2 hour bus ride to the park. For many of them, this was the first time leaving Lukaya and their first bus ride. Teachers guided students to observe along the way. We left their home area, called Buganda, and entered a new kingdom called Ankole. About half-way on the trip, we stopped to buy warm chapati (unleavened Indian flatbread) from a street vendor for breakfast.



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Working with students and teachers

Every MSA child needed to be photographed. So each day we would ride our bicycles to the campus and work with a class. We started with Primary 1 and worked our way up to Secondary 4 – 500 boys and girls. While I was taking the photos, Kathryn worked with the class teachers and Kivumbi Hamdan, a recent COP student. They guided the students in making bookmarks and writing letters to sponsors. It was a busy and satisfying time.

Improvements in Dormitory Arrangements

A grant from the Eckels Foundation made a spacious new boys dormitory possible. And, the S4 and P7 boys moved in with great excitement in early February. Since 2016, female candidates have been enjoying Judy's House as they prepare for *(Continued on page 4)*

Another new experience awaited students as they entered the park--a boat ride! They observed lots of hippos, crocodiles, cape buffalo, fish eagles, and kingfishers. Our school cooks prepared and packed lunch early in the morning, and the children enjoyed a feast of fried rice, beans with sauce, and soda. It's a party when there is soda.

After lunch, a park ranger joined us for a game drive. We were lucky enough to see giraffes, introduced to Lake Mburo N.P. a few years ago. Many different antelopes, zebras, monkeys, and warthogs kept the game drive exciting. And we had a few thrilling escapes from muddy potholes.

A lot of singing accompanied our homeward trip. We arrived back in Lukaya before 7 p.m. and dropped off the children near their homes before the sun was setting.

The following day, the children were treated to new pencils, a box of crayons, and drawing paper. They were encouraged to illustrate their favorite animal from the school trip. The result was a colorful menagerie decorating the walls of P-5.



Trip of a Lifetime *by Susan Harper*

Ever since Mustard Seed Academy began, I have dreamed of going to Uganda. In February, I decided to make it a reality. My main goal was to meet Eria, the boy I had sponsored for many years (pictured with me below).

On the drive from Entebbe to Lukaya, there was so much to see--extreme poverty, tiny mud/brick houses, a plethora of products sold along the road, chickens running wild, but goats and cows tethered right beside the highway eating grass in the heat. And people everywhere! Maybe unfairly, I decided when you have no job, no money, and no hope you have children.



After getting settled, it was time to go to school. At first, the small children were shy. Then, one decided to approach, and everyone joined in. Most are smiling like we expect from pictures, but some are somber. You wonder how awful their young life must have been? The one thing that stood out to me was how soft-spoken and gentle the children are. You can hardly hear them when they speak. Clearly, they like school and are lucky to get to go to such a good school. I observed many children wandering the streets. The poverty is everywhere. In contrast, the MSA students, in their school uniforms, are so cute.

Talking to the children was my favorite thing to do. Eria told me he knew what I looked like from Facebook? I had no idea. But I found they have some access to computers and a keen interest in all things American. Students asked about skyscrapers, earthquakes, food, and clothing.

I learned that so little means so much in this country and how grateful the children/adults are for Mustard Seed. I

could go on and on about my trip-- shopping in the market, art classes, 5th-grade field trip, the nursery school (oh my!), meeting some Mustard Seed graduates.

I certainly am more grateful for everything I have, and I wish all sponsors could make a trip to Uganda. Know that every penny you give is being used, and every penny you can give is needed. Elaine, thank you for letting me tag along on the trip of a lifetime. Kathryn and Dana (Hiscock), it was so lovely to meet you. Above all, thanks to you all, plus Professor Joseph, for opening your hearts to these children.

A Graduation Party *by Kathryn Hiscock*

One of our first COP students, Mariam, graduated from the YMCA's certificate program in fashion and design. Her family was very proud of her and were



honoring her with a party. We three Muzungus (white people), Elaine, Dana, and Kathryn, were asked to join. Mariam's village is not far from MSA, and it is where George, our general manager, is also from. Good that George was driving—the roads were mired in mud and tricky to navigate. But, the weather was lovely with sunshine and breezes.

We arrived after the beginning of the service— not a problem.

Mariam's mother came running across the front yard to greet us. More chairs were brought out, and we listened to the Imam (speaking in Arabic) and smelled the incense.

When the meal was ready, we were invited inside their humble home amidst an array of colorful dishes of food and colorfully dressed women. It was an honor to be there, and the family was clearly honored by our presence. They gave us gifts (including 2 live chickens) and repeatedly expressed gratitude for Mustard Seed and Mariam's success.

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their exams. Now the boys have caught up. These lovely dorms make life more comfortable for the hard-working candidates. And, they send a message of love and support.

Assessing and Planning

One of the benefits of spending an extended period in Lukaya is the chance to have far-reaching conversations with the Ugandan leaders and other stakeholders. These were deep conversations with dedicated, educated, and dynamic Ugandan leaders. We left feeling confident about the future.



Secondary girls from S-4 were happy to be staying in Judy's House. Boarding is more fun and more conducive to studying.



Twins in Baby Class model their new dresses, created by Lee Whitton, RPU board member.

Sadly, Shaban lost his mother just as school was beginning in February. He is comforted by being included in Rapha's House Boys' quarters.

