

ChildLine

JANUARY, 2005

VOLUME I, NUMBER I

The newsletter of the Uganda AIDS Orphan Children's Foundation

Welcome to Our First Edition!

We are very pleased to share with you this first edition of ChildLine. Every six months, we'll be bringing you news on UAOCF's programs, the children we work to help, our supporters, and upcoming activities. There's a lot going on! And we want to be able to keep you up to date and connected. ChildLine also gives you a forum to share your thoughts and questions about UAOCF and the work that we do. So please let us know what you think! You can contact us any time via the UAOCF website (www.UAOCF.org), or send us a note at our mailing address: P.O. Box 64485, Los Angeles, CA 90064. We'd love to hear from you!

Christmas Giving Tree 2004

In 2003, St. Joan of Arc Parish generously allowed us to "supplement" their annual Christmas giving tree for needy families with a second tree for UAOCF. This first Giving Tree was a huge success: 150 families shared their love and Christmas spirit by contributing. Over \$3,800 was donated to support 129 children. 2004 was an even bigger success, with 270 donors contributing \$6,100. This enabled the children to buy such basic items as mattresses, blankets and clothing. Many of the families who made one-time Christmas Giving Tree donations were so moved by the letter of thanks from their children that they asked how they could continue supporting them through the Adopt-An-Orphan program. Families both in the US and Uganda felt blessed by taking part. The "Tale of Two Benjamins" (next page) is the story of one such connection, and how a gift made by a stranger opened the hearts of everyone involved. ■

What Is the Uganda AIDS Orphan Children Foundation?

When Rev. Fred Byaruhanga came to the United States from his native Uganda in 1993, he brought with him compelling memories and images of a crisis in his homeland: nearly one million children who had lost one or both parents to AIDS. His own family had taken in one of these children, and they continue to care for her and love her as one of their own. But what about all the others?

Convinced of the need to act, Father Fred spearheaded the formation of the Uganda AIDS Orphan Children Foundation (UAOCF), a non-profit organization whose mission is to care for these needy and often desperate children. We have targeted four underserved districts in rural southwestern Uganda. A management team in Los Angeles works with a volunteer Oversight Board and a paid Program Administrator in Uganda to provide assistance with the orphans' daily needs, health care and education. A strong education is critical in helping the children to become self sufficient and contributing adults.

Through corporate grants and individual donations, UAOCF supports two general approaches to



Regina A. is one of the millions of Ugandan children who have lost parents or other family members to AIDS.

dealing with this crisis: placing orphans in caring foster homes, and supporting the Kabale Diocese's home for orphaned and vulnerable children, Hope House. Currently, UAOCF supports 70 children in foster homes, and hopes to be able to help more children every year. Father Fred was able to secure a generous grant from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Holy Childhood Association to refurbish the Kabale Hope House building, which should open early in 2005. How do we know we're succeeding? The children tell us. Aloysius, a 10-year-old boy, wrote, "I am an orphan. I am writing to thank you for the gift of \$20. Thank you for loving me. I promise to pray for you every day." ■

Adopt-An-Orphan Update

When the Adopt-An-Orphan program got off the ground about a year ago, the goals were optimistic but realistic: provide \$300 per year for each of 50 children. Through the help of individual sponsors, as well as grants from the Conrad Hilton Foundation and the Northrop Grumman Corporation, we did it! How do you follow that kind of success? With over 30,000 orphaned and vulnerable children in the Kabale area of Uganda alone, there's only one way: set higher goals to help more children! For

2005, we hope to find sponsors for 100 children in the Adopt-An-Orphan program. The money is managed through our volunteer Board members in Uganda, who use it to pay for the children's school fees, books and uniforms, as well as disbursing it directly to families to help pay for other needs. Want to be part of changing a child's life? Adopt an orphan! Call UAOCF at 310-479-8396.

The Tale of Two Benjamins

Benjamin B. is a seven-year-old boy who likes to play games and soccer. He has three sisters and brothers, and he lives with his mother, who is very ill. His father died two years ago. In 2003, he was selected as one of the children UAOCF would include in our Christmas Giving Tree program.

The family who chose Benjamin B. from the Christmas Giving Tree also had a son named Benjamin, the same age as Benjamin B. Even at his young age, American Ben's family had already begun teaching him the importance of sharing with those less fortunate than he. When the family received a Thank You letter from Ben B. after Christmas, the two boys became pen pals.

American Ben wanted to do more to help his new friend who lived so far away. He began setting aside one-third of his allowance to send to Ben B. When the calendar ticked closer to Christmas, 2004, American Ben started doing extra

chores so he could save up more money to give Benjamin B. a good Christmas. No one asked him to. He wanted to.

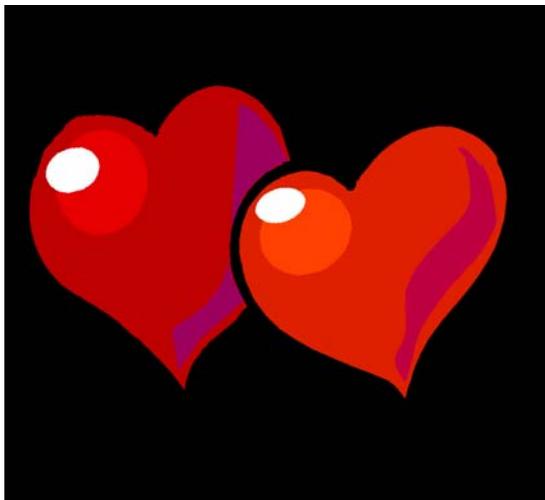
"It's really important in his life, it's really important to him," says American Ben's mother. "He always asks, 'I wonder what Ben's doing now?' He feels a sense of pride." Her son isn't the only member of the family who's been affected by their connection with Ben B. "It's been really good for the whole family," explains American Ben's mother. She now exchanges letters and photos with Benjamin B.'s mother, hoping to share what life in America is like as her family learns more about Uganda.



Our two Benjamins, Ben B. and Ben A., have made a connection that extends to both their families and beyond.

American Ben has also shared his experiences with his classmates at school. He reads the letters he receives from Ben B. to the class, and the class made a weeklong project of looking up information on Uganda and the things Ben B. shares about his life there. The two boys are still pen pals, and American Ben's mother hopes the two will continue to write, and eventually have the opportunity to meet as young men. "I'm really proud of him!" she told us about her son, and it's a sentiment echoed in a letter written by Ben B.'s mother about her son.

"This story is about so much more than a donation," explained Father Fred, UAOCF founder. "It's about the best of humanity in the face of the worst circumstances. It's about caring, friendship, human beings reaching out to each other. Children teach us so much! American Ben has shown us all how simple and rewarding it can be to help a friend, to change a life."



“HEART TO HEART”

YOU ARE INVITED TO THE

ANNUAL UAOCF DONOR CELEBRATION

In the SJA Parish Hall

WINE AND CHEESE 4-5pm

Presentation by Father Fred at 5pm

RSVP by February 1st

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