

ARLINGTON ACADEMY OF HOPE



Building the Foundation for Hope in Rural Uganda

511 N. Edison St., Arlington, VA 22203
P.O. Box 7694, Arlington, VA 22207
(ph) 703 528-1951
www.arlingtonacademyofhope.org

A Progress Report October 2005

Dear Friends of AAH,

Time flies so quickly these days. Yesterday was just August, and the memories that were still fresh in our minds (those of us who visited Uganda this summer) were those of AAH children singing their good bye songs to us as we prepared to depart their school. With tears streaming down their young faces, the children sang:

*The long awaited hour has come
For us to bid you goodbye
This is so hard to say surely
But God will help us to bear.*

I mean, who among us who went to Uganda can forget those moments? In our sleep, in our waking, in our minds, the words just kept coming back over and over again:

*We are going to miss our dear ones
We are going to miss your love
We are going to miss your company
We are going to miss your care.*

Well, those voices. Perhaps they are meant to stay forever. They just can't be wiped away. We miss them too. We love them, and we surely miss them.

Now back to the present.

In this progress report,

1. Letters from a grateful generation
2. A dude discovers Wisconsin
3. The AAH board meets in West Virginia
4. A Report from the Headmaster
5. Newsbriefs
6. Upcoming AAH Events

1. Letters from a grateful generation

Since returning from Uganda, we have received many wonderful letters from the children at AAH to the families of their sponsors here, thanking them for their sponsorship, but also telling the children here about a different way of life at their school. Here are a few of the letters:

Dear Henry,

I hope you are fine. I am happy to write to you. How is America? I would like to thank your parents for what they are doing for me. Life at school is good and class work is good too. The boys like football and we always play at lunch time. Do you also like football?

In our school we grow crops like cabbages, maize, eggplants, tomatoes, carrots, and cassava. Do you also grow them?

I wish you good success. Hope to hear from you.

From Aaron Weswala (P4).

Dear my sponsor,

How are you and how is your life going in America?

I thank you for all the things you have done for me and my school. I thank you for sponsoring me. I am happy to be part of your life. Thank you very much for your support.

Thank you for making my hope real than the world itself. Thank you for planning my future. God bless you for the great job you have done for me.

Mabonga Daphne (P5)

Dear my sponsor,

How are you? How is your family? I am writing this letter to thank you for what you have done for me.

These days the studies are ok. The first term I was the first in class, and this term I have done the same. And I say I will continue putting in more effort next term so I can pass in division one. With God's grace, I will do it.

I shall not become lazy. If I become lazy, I miss a lot. The school is so good. It has a generator, which generates power. We get free school supplies like books, pencils, pens, and so many other things. Since I came to this school I have never lacked anything to use. Now I just pray to God that he may help me do the same every term.

I thank you for the support you have given me. May God bless you.

Your loving child,

Mangongo Ali (P6)

There were letters to child sponsors, ATS, Bethel Church members, and The Threads of Love ministry at Truro Church that donated 160 blankets to the school. There were messages of thanks to Cynthia Margeson and Catherine Reising-Jones who spent many weeks teaching at the school earlier this year. And there were many general letters of appreciation to all those who have made AAH possible.

Our Child Sponsorship Program facilitates regular correspondence between the sponsor in the U.S. and the child in Uganda. Those who are participating say it's an enriching experience and great way to learn about each other. If you are interested in becoming a sponsor and ensuring one child gets to attend AAH, please visit "Child Sponsorship Opportunity" at <http://www.arlingtonacademyofhope.org/GetInvolved.htm> or contact Jennifer Paul at Jen.Paul@verizon.net for details.

2. A Dude discovers (and falls in love with) Wisconsin

It was way back in 1622, so the history books say, that the first European “discovered” Wisconsin. A little known French explorer, trader and dragoman, Ettiene Brule was an emissary of Samuel de Champlain when he visited the northern edges of modern day Wisconsin. He was on a mission to find a water route to the Pacific. Instead, what he found was a “*country that was densely covered with a heavy growth of timber, great forests of pine and hard timber. When the first settlers reached Eau Claire county and observed the immensity of the forest some of them little thought that only a few short years would elapse before the county would become one of the leading counties rich in agriculture. Others of the pioneers who came to make a home for themselves and families set to work clearing the land, erecting buildings, and otherwise improving the land, so that now, where the wild beasts once roamed at their leisure the soil is made to blossom like the rose. The soil for the most part is a rich clay and sandy loam, with here and there in some parts of the county a little sand, which in later years has been made to produce abundant crops. The county is especially favored with a bountiful water supply nearly everywhere, for in most every direction there are creeks and small streams.*”

So goes the description of Wisconsin in the “Genealogical and Historical Resources for Eau Claire County,” the description of a land so rich and inviting and lovely, that yours truly felt he must see it for himself.

And so, early last month, at the invitation of AAH Board member Sarah Godlewski and her parents, Ann and David, I traveled along with Jaime Mulligan to this fairyland to meet and see for myself what those early explorers described so expansively. But my reasons for going to Wisconsin were to spread the word about Arlington Academy of Hope in new territory. Sarah’s parents had arranged for Jaime and I to give three presentations to the students and staff at three colleges in Wisconsin: the University of

Wisconsin, Stout, the University of Wisconsin, Eau Clair, and the Chippewa Valley Technical College. We were graciously received at all these colleges. At the University of Wisconsin, Stout, we met and presented to 13 administrators, led by Wayne Argo, and all expressed great interest in what we were doing at AAH. Later we spoke to two classes before having lunch with Prof. Helen Swanson.

At the University of Wisconsin, Eau Clair, we presented to a group of students and faculty. Phillip Huelsbeck, the International Student Advisor, coordinated our trip to the university. Dr. Karl Markgraf, director of the Center for International Education, was particularly interested in our presentation and the possibilities of a student exchange program. We are looking forward to following up with him on this.

At Chippewa Valley Technical College, I spoke to 5 different classes, all arranged by the school's diversity specialist, Ka Vang. In the afternoon, I had the honor to address students and staff in the auditorium, an address that was beamed live to four campuses. The College had the presentation archived, and so if you want to see a glimpse of it, all you need is to click here: http://www.cvtc.edu/videos/asx/tmp/john_wanda.asx. You can also access the link on the AAH website at www.arlingtonacademyofhope.org.

Beyond the presentations on AAH, however, my visit to Wisconsin was memorable for a number of reasons. I was overwhelmed by the hospitality and warmth that David and Ann extended to me. David took me on a 100 mile motorcycle ride through the farmlands of Wisconsin, and throughout that trip, my thoughts just kept hopping back to the description of the original Wisconsin. How beautiful, how edifying, how marvellous was this countryside. This was indeed the country that captivated the early French settlers. It was these French settlers, after being mesmerized by the clear and beautiful waters of Chippewa river, who gave the place its current name, Eau Clair.

David also took me on my first kayaking experience on the waters of River Chippewa, and at the ripe old age of 41, introduced me to the marvels of rollerblading. Other than a few falls (he promised not to tell), I was not that worse for wear. He showed me the famed statue of Paul Bunyan and the raging bull. He and Ann made for us that special famed Wisconsin delicacy, bratwursts. David took time to show me the rivers and canyons and countryside that make this state probably the most beautiful state in the universe. No wonder I had fallen in love.

Well, now love feelings aside, I need to work hard to re-connect with all the good friends we made in Wisconsin. Sarah will get back in touch with the three colleges and see what kind of relationships we can build with them. David will follow up for us the contacts made at CVTC, and hopefully, we shall soon have a thriving relationship between AAH and the colleges of the most beautiful state in the world.

3. The AAH Board goes on a Retreat

On October 1, Beatrice Tierney, AAH board member and Executive Director for the Children's International School invited us to her special mountain home in Martinsburg, WV for a retreat to discuss the future of AAH. Among the many good ideas generated at

this retreat was agreement on a vision statement, the way forward on the Early Childhood Development program and our nascent child sponsorship program.

On the AAH vision, the board adopted the following statement:

“The vision of Arlington Academy of Hope is to enrich the lives of children in rural Uganda by providing access to a high-quality, well-rounded education within their village communities. We seek to develop the model school in each village where we have a presence and in so doing to set new standards of academic excellence, to prepare the children for adult lives that contribute to the progress of their communities, to meet the health and nutritional needs of the children, and to encourage neighboring schools to improve their performance. AAH also seeks to foster cultural understanding and interaction through shared learning experiences between the people of the United States and Uganda.”

This vision will guide our activities for many years to come.

In other news from the retreat, the board:

- Approved guidelines developed by the Child Sponsorship subcommittee on the child sponsorship program. The guidelines provide for a clear process and an emphasis on building a relationship between the sponsoring family in the US and the student at AAH.
- Set up a subcommittee to discuss and develop guidelines on what happens “after P7”.
- Set up a subcommittee to plan future Uganda trips
- Accepted an offer from the World Children’s Relief to start an early Childhood Development Program at AAH next year. The hope is that WCR will pick up most of the initial costs. This will further consolidate the close relationship that already exists between AAH and WCR

4. The Headmaster Writes

The headmaster of AAH, Thomas Kitandwe has written a great end of term letter that has been posted on the AAH website at www.arlingtonacademyofhope.org. Below are excerpts from that letter:

“The school term that opened on 23rd May 2005 finally came to an end successfully on 26th August, 2005. We continue to extend our sincere and special thanks to all who have made Arlington Academy of Hope shine.

“The general school attendance has been good and the school enrollment of now stands at 202.

“There has been significant improvement in reading and speaking of English in the school with the buying of the English curriculum books. It remains a challenge to get text books for all the subjects and other readers’ books to aid in the reading process.

“The arrival of the US visitors in July left everyone in the area tongue-tied and speechless. One cannot imagine the passion for AAH and the people of Mbale as a whole for the US people. We still always remember them and the sacrifice of time and funds to travel all the way from the US to see us and all that they carried and left behind for the school. We look forward to receiving them again and may be for a much longer time.

“The need for more rooms continues to a rise day by day. Next year, with the coming P-7 class, there will also be need for a store-room for food supplies, school utensils and other supplies because the one used to-date will be a classroom. A sick bay, with a trained attendant, has become an urgent need for the school as we wait for a clinic. Every other day a number of children will be found lying in the partitioned Bursar’s and the secretary’s office. They are always given pain killers, and when they feel better they come to school the following day but then fall down again because they don’t have proper treatment.

“Outside the school, the infant mortality rate is high due to lack of medical services nearby. At the neighborhood of the school, within a period of two months, six children (1-10 years) have died of malaria. Earlier in my report, I mentioned teachers also falling sick either at school or home. It is difficult for one to get access to the nearby medical facility, let alone being sure of any sound treatment there. For this reason, we long for a nurse of our own and some medical supplies at the school.

“As we come to third term and end of the year, the biggest challenges ahead us are the upcoming P.7 class, teachers’ houses and health services to the school. However, what so far has been done puts a smile on every body’s face and creates hope for the entire community and whoever knew Bumwalukani before.

“We are totally confident, with your continued support, this area will be transformed.

THOMAS KISOLO KITANDWE
HEADTEACHER, AAH

News briefs

Meeting the Uganda President – On September 21, 2005 AAH leadership was invited to meet the president of Uganda at a function organized at Capitol Hill and attended by many senators and congressmen. AAH was delighted to accept this invitation, and three AAH board members – Holly Hawthorne, Beatrice Tierney, and Joyce Wanda, as well as Dean Scribner, AAH’s volunteer official photographer, represented AAH at the function. We were delighted to be recognized by the Uganda ambassador in Washington with this invitation, and we thank her and her staff for this honor.

Child Sponsorship event - On Friday, October 21, the AAH Child Sponsorship Committee hosted a successful event at Arlington Traditional School for sponsors, or those contemplating sponsoring children at AAH. The event was well attended and graced by the presence of Paul Ferguson, a member of the Arlington County board. Holly and Cynthia had a fantastic presentation, and Heather Burneson, wearing a Uganda

Busuti, was a star emcee. At the end of the meeting, one parent, already a sponsor of a child at AAH, gave an additional check for \$1,000 to support AAH activities, while another gave \$500. We thank these parents, and the many others who attended and contribute to AAH. If you would like to participate in our child sponsorship program, please visit the "Child Sponsorship Opportunity" section of our website at <http://www.arlingtonacademyofhope.org/GetInvolved.htm> for more information on how to become a child sponsor.

Textbook fund growing – In August, after our return from Uganda, we made a special appeal for textbooks so students at AAH can each have a textbook in each subject area. Two parents have dramatically responded to this appeal. Doris Hawthorne, the mother of the ATS principal, and Amy and Peter White, who are already sponsoring three children at AAH, have responded with truly generous donations to this fund. The ATS students council has given \$300 towards textbooks. And just the other day, we received a check for \$332 from a disbanding girl scouts troop that includes a number of former ATS students. This brought our textbook fund to \$3,632 on our original goal of \$5,000. Just a few more donations and this goal for the current year will have been reached.

Young Patriots help load AAH container – Saturday, October 22, 2005 saw a group of about 10 young volunteers from George Mason University descend on Storage USA facilities in Fairfax to load a container destined for Uganda. Sarah Godlewski and Jaime Mulligan were the primary recruiters of this dedicated group that helped us load more than 165 boxes of books on the container for AAH. The container space was donated by the East African Action Group, a ministry of Truro Church in Fairfax, VA. We thank Truro for the space on the container, and all the volunteers for helping to load not just our stuff, but stuff going to UCU, Kigezi, Rugarama, and even Sudan.

Amy Apgar is new Education Committee Chairperson – On Thursday, October 13, 2005, Amy Apgar, a special education teacher at ATS, a sponsor, and a parent of a student at Alexandria Country Day School, was elected Chairperson of the AAH Education Committee. Amy takes over from Sarah Godlewski, who was appointed by the board as a special University Programs Coordinator for AAH. Sarah will work on establishing relationships between George Mason and other US colleges with AAH, particularly in the area of study abroad programs. We welcome Amy to AAH leadership and congratulate her and Sarah on their new positions.

Knights of the High Country – On Friday October, 21, 2005, I made a special presentation to the Knights of the High Country, a group of volunteers and dedicated professionals from across the country. The group was introduced to us by Dr. Daryl Wills, a past president of the ACA. The group was impressed by the activities we have done to provide quality education in Uganda. They have shown interest in partnering with us to build a library at the school. We are keeping our fingers crossed on this one.

A head teacher's house – We have received a generous first donation for a head teacher's house at AAH. The donation was facilitated by AAH board member, Susan Peters, and her husband, Richard Lee. Richard and Susan have been great advocates for better teacher housing at AAH, and we thank them for their very generous gesture and commitment to AAH.

Rock our World Campaign – The Arlington Academy of Hope has been invited to represent the Africa region in a program sponsored by Apple Computers called Rock Our World, where children from different schools around the world share their experiences and work on specific projects via satellite. AAH's full participation is hampered by lack of access to the internet and poor computer technology, but we see this as an opportunity to introduce ourselves to the world, and we shall make special efforts to make this work for the children at AAH. They need this link with other students around the world. The program was facilitated by Betsy Whalen of Discovery Channel, and Carol Anne McGuire of Apple Computers.

Taping a TV Special – On Thursday, October 27, 2005, the Superintendent of Arlington County Public Schools, Dr. Robert Smith, invited Holly, Cynthia, ATS student Sophie Frank and myself to represent AAH in a local cable TV discussion about the relationship between ATS and AAH, and what the Arlington community can do to support AAH further. The segment will be aired on Arlington Cable TV (Channel 70) for two weeks in December. We thank Dr. Smith for his interest in AAH, and look forward to a positive response from this show.

Upcoming AAH events

- Fri, Nov 4, 6:30-8, at Arlington Traditional School: International Night. AAH will participate. All are invited.
- Mon, Nov 7, 7 pm, AAH Development Committee Meeting
- Wed, Nov 9, 4:30 pm, AAH Outreach Committee Meeting
- Mon, Dec 5, 7 pm, AAH Board Meeting
- Sat, Dec 10, 7 pm, End of Year Thank You party, hosted by the Wanda's. All are welcome.

If you wish to know more about how you can participate in these meetings and events or further support our program, please contact me at jwanda@comcast.net, or Jaime at Arlingtonacademyhope@yahoo.com.

Thank you, and until next time.

John Wanda