



July 4, 2023 Newsletter

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

What did God do through twenty enthusiastic Friends *in just four days*?

Three projects were significantly advanced, two sites were publicly dedicated, a new industry was created and hundreds of people were blessed!

Although cheated of a day by an airline delay, the 2023 team, along with our Ugandan partners, jump-started a dairy cow breeding and milk production project at the vocational school, helped dedicate and bring the Boys Dormitory closer to completion, provided electrical connections for all campus buildings to the new generator, and repaired and improved the school cook stoves. They also provided occasions for four major community gatherings and celebrations, one of which was the dedication of a Christian Nursery School managed by a Kibbuse Foundation Board member. It was an eventful four days!



Photo by Albert Kiseembo of the 2023 Team with Ugandan friends

GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN . . . “

Every mission team has stories of people giving sacrificially in response to the Christ-call to mission work, whether on home turf or far away. This team was no exception. Two women struggling with chronic diseases were on the team. One, who has Lupus, was on her first trip overseas. She worked with a group of other medical professionals at the Good Samaritan Clinic. The other, our FOK Board Secretary, has MS. This was her THIRD trip to Nyamarwa. Both put aside the comforts and readily available medical services of home to share life, faith and love with our Ugandan partners.



Photo of Tom Sterk with Rosemary Beyeza, Head of Agriculture at KVTC

The third person, Tom Sterk, a retiree from Grandville, MI who first visited Uganda with the 2020 team, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer this past year. He suspended chemo and radiation treatments, regardless of consequences, so that he could go to Uganda, where he headed up a group helping initiate a dairy project at the vocational school. He had previously pulled together a number of donors to fund the purchase of two pregnant high-producing milk cows and fund the construction of a shelter for the cows. That “shed,” with concrete floors, knee walls and a metal roof, was completed by local laborers when the FOK team arrived. Tom returned to Grand Rapids full of joy that he had witnessed and participated in this historic business start in a rural area where it is desperately needed.

Since his return, Tom has learned that the cancer is inoperable and he now knows, short of a miracle of God, he will soon be called to let go of this life and find his hope for the future, face-to-face with the Lord. He is ready for the transition, but your prayers are welcome, because there could be some rough water ahead for him. His daughter Nikki, who is as enthusiastic about the dairy project as her dad, wrote this after learning of the diagnosis:

“Dad and I talked daily about how amazing the excitement from the kids, teachers, community and government is for this program, and to have been able to help jump start it, to have left knowing we helped ease anxiety by providing them with what they needed for their fields to grow the proper nutrition these cows need is an inexpressible feeling. In fact, I broke down in front of church Sunday trying to share our experience.”

TRAVEL AND TIME

Most of you have heard humorous references to “African Time,” a euphemism for “late” or “slow to appear.” Well, time delays and losses are not all due to “cultural habits,” and they are not unique to Africa. Here in America, we have our own set of time devourers, many related to just being too busy and technologically complicated.

So how did a ten-day trip get reduced to four days?! Short answer? Travel realities. A two-hour take-off delay in Chicago (too efficient scheduling of transfers) meant the team missed the one flight per day from Brussels to Entebbe. That is already a loss of eight hours because of time zones, so thirty-two hours were lost before the team even got to Uganda, twenty-four of which were the result of too-tight scheduling.

Then, ground travel in Uganda is a major time consumer. It took the better part of four days to travel from Entebbe to Nyamarwa Subcounty, then from Nyamarwa to the Game Park for the second weekend, and from there back to Entebbe. Counting flight time, that's the better part of six days just for getting places - leaving only four days for on-site ministry.

SO, IS IT WORTH IT?

The first person we would have you ask this question is the one who sacrificed the most to go – our dairy farming friend Tom. He returned to the States glowing. When he greeted this writer upon arrival, I truly saw the glory of the Lord on his face.

What a joy it was for him to see those two pregnant cows ensconced in their new corral – and to have a chance to train and encourage the agricultural faculty members and maintenance people at the school in the calving, care, feeding and milking of these beautiful animals. He was joking, of course, but he declared with humor and enthusiasm that he was ready to “go back next week!” What a precious brother in the Lord. Please keep him in your prayers.



Photo of Daniella Kamps with her new friend “Promise”

Mission leader Nate Kamps considered involvement of youth as one of the major blessings of this team. Ten of the twenty members were under the age of twenty! These young people had the adventure of their lives, and when asked what their “favorite moments” were, the three I interviewed all said “It was the kids I got to know over here. They were the most special thing for me.” Every one of them returned with a changed perspective on life and a real appreciation of how God can give abundant life and joy, even to kids living in chronic poverty; but also, these young Americans returned knowing that those same Ugandan kids long to have more opportunities, more knowledge and more freedom to explore life, things that visitors from our wealthy country can help bring to them.

There were other enthusiasts. Cami, daughter of FOK veteran Don Dykstra, was also bubbling over with joy and thanksgiving when she arrived home – full of energy in spite of the 23-hour flight to Chicago! She was so impressed with how much is being done for the local community through the vocational center, the clinic, and the Christian Primary School.

And here is a comment from Stella Nabitosi, new Principal of the Kibbuse Vocational Center: “We appreciate your cooperation and the great efforts you have put in to make Kibbuse shine; indeed, we are so grateful! Thank you very much and the good Lord bless you always.”

So, YES! These short team trips are worth a great deal. They bolster the faith and hopes of our Ugandan partners and at the same time enlarge the love and compassion of every participant. Everyone came home with a changed perspective on what is truly important in life and a deeper appreciation of God's love and care for ALL his people.

Finally, the Kibbuse Board Chairman, George Willy Tusabomu, in his recent thank-you letter, wrote the recurring refrain of both our team members and our Ugandan partners:

“To God be the Glory for the recent journey!”.

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