



The Rafiki Foundation, Inc.

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December 2004

*"Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay,
you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand" (Isaiah 64:8).*

Merry Christmas from Kampala, Uganda

What a delight to celebrate my fifth Christmas in East Africa in the "pearl of Africa's crown." If you have been here serving God as a MiniMissionary you have seen for yourself why Uganda is "the pearl." The lush vegetation is a result of hot, sunny days following the tropical storms that feed this land, especially in December, our summer season. What a wonderful place to raise children and minister to teenage girls!

Here at the Rafiki Village Uganda we are rejoicing in God's provision of new team members, new mothers, new mother's assistants, and new girls at the girls' center. Our three families of children will soon grow to five, after our new mothers are trained, and see how healthy and happy everyone looks:



RAFIKI FAMILY DECEMBER 2004

We thank God for mothers who take their calling to heart by teaching the children Scripture and Bible hymns, helping them with their school work, and training them up in a way that will glorify God. As I open the school in the morning, it is not unusual for me to hear a family of children singing a hymn on the way home from breakfast to prepare for school. *There's Power in the Blood; Oh, When the Saints Go Marching In*, and *For the Beauty of the Earth* are just a few of the hymns the

children sing. In the event that you are not familiar with our work here in Uganda, I am speaking of children ages one to five years old! God's work is always impressive.

Our kindergarten class now has six students who are four and five years old. All are learning phonics and are able to read simple words. All are practicing writing letters and numbers. Most importantly, the kindergarten students are learning to speak in full sentences in English, and to use the proper pronouns when speaking. The children most enjoy the Bible teaching, singing hymns, and praying. What a joy it is to hear the children practice their English by answering questions about the Bible story or by saying the verse into a tape recorder. We are looking forward to having a Ugandan teacher's assistant join us for the next school term. Our interview process is taking place now. Please pray for our new assistant to quickly adjust to Rafiki's teaching methodology.



KINDERGARTEN WITH ME

In the younger class of three- and four-year-olds, it is not unusual for a child to have memorized the Bible verse by Friday. When called in front of the class to say the verse, he or she will, with great enthusiasm, say the verse by heart without help from the teacher. God has been gracious to give us the ability to

have the children in one class, with a reasonable class size of ten children for our teacher and assistant. However, we look forward to the challenge of including new children who will arrive in January or February. Typically our new children know very little, if any, English. So, preschool becomes a place where they learn their first English words and begin to understand what it means to "sit on your square" or "line up." Who knows what is going through those little minds during the Bible or unit teaching time? What we do know is that God helps our children feel secure and learn quickly to fully participate in class.

I want to tell you about one little girl here named Jesca. When Jesca first arrived at the Rafiki Village early this year she would only allow one person to get close to her and would hit anyone else who dared try. Without going into Jesca's specific background, let me just say that every child who comes to a Rafiki Village has a history including either abandonment or death of parents. We thought that perhaps Jesca would benefit from joining the other children in school a few weeks after she arrived. She seemed fine the first day, but the second day was just too much. So we waited. I went on furlough. June came and went. July arrived, and with it the GAMES activities for school children. For two hours in the morning the children were involved in games, art, music, and sports. Jesca did well. It helped that our children's center director was the main teacher for games, since she is the one whom Jesca first trusted. July went, August arrived. I returned to Uganda and we started school. Jesca did great! She even looks like a different girl. She is happy, healthy, and speaks English enough to express her needs, her likes, and her dislikes. And when Jesca is happy, everyone knows it because she dances around and squeals with delight.

The school is located almost in the center of the village, and my house is just across the road, so my physical sphere of interest is concentrated. But right next door, on the other side of the duplex is my friend and teammate who is the director of the girls' center. We often meet in our shared laundry room to find out how things are going at our respective centers. Our newest group of girls brings the total now to twenty-one. There are

three teachers at the center, who are kept busy with three classes going all morning including English, sewing, health and nutrition, art, music, and computer. In the afternoon all the girls participate in learning to weave using hand looms, miniature, transportable looms, or full-size standing looms. The girls weave with rag strips, yarn, and dyed thread. It is fascinating to watch the girls at their work when I have the rare opportunity to visit. I am greatly encouraged to hear from Shirlene how the girls are growing in maturity and coming to Christ through the life-skills training we offer. God's grace is evident in His protection of these vulnerable girls who walk to and from the center in the dark mornings (and sometimes in tropical storms). It is a special treat to see two of "our" girls teaching the children in the Sunday school class at church when it is my turn to take the Rafiki children to church on Sunday.

Will you rejoice with us in God's love for the children and girls of Uganda? And will you join us, as a MiniMissionary, or even a long-term missionary to share God's gifts with His most precious children and youth? The Rafiki Home Office is located in San Antonio, Texas, and offers training for both long- and short-term mission service in Africa. You may contact Rafiki by calling 210-244-2600.

May your Christmas be as blessed as mine.

Love,



Joanne

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P.S. From the Home Office: Joanne is currently at 92% for her current term.

NOTE: Please visit www.rafiki-foundation.org to find information on your ROS, what *Rafiki* is doing, the centers, and the Exchange.