



The Rafiki Foundation, Inc.

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“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Colossians 1:12).

Dear Friends and Family,

Education is a prized asset in Africa. Unlike in the United States, it is not available to everyone. There are government schools, but they are few and far between, grossly overcrowded, and understaffed (100 plus students in a classroom is normal), with few books and materials, and poorly equipped classrooms. Most children in our area have to rely upon private schools that charge school fees. Many children are orphans, living with extended family where there may be ten or more children of school age. Education is seen as the key to a “better life.” But these guardians cannot afford even the most meager of school fees, let alone the extra expenses of school uniforms, school materials, or school exam fees. Many parents and guardians sacrifice to pay school fees, but when there’s little income and many children, there’s not sufficient money to pay school fees. People come up to you on the street, asking for you to pay their children’s school fees. It is the number one request for aid.



SOME OF THE STUDENTS IN A TYPICAL UGANDAN PRIVATE SCHOOL

Education at Rafiki Village Uganda

Realizing that this is a common problem in all African countries, this year Rafiki has reached out in compassion and kindness to the local community in all the countries where we have Villages to integrate some of the local children into our school at no cost to the students. Uniforms, breakfast and lunch, and school materials are also provided. The classes are small (twenty is the maximum size),

with both Rafiki Overseas Staff (ROS) teaching as well as qualified national teachers. We have forty-three new students attending this year, the primary students being integrated with the Rafiki resident students (our former orphans who now live at Rafiki). As you can imagine, to say it has been a challenge is an absolute understatement, but we all feel that the added responsibilities are more than compensated for by the opportunities these children are being given.



RAFIKI’S SCHOOL—SMALL CLASSES, EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS, AND A WELL-DESIGNED, MODERN PHYSICAL FACILITY FOR THE SCHOOL

I am teaching Senior One language arts, Primary Six language arts, and Senior One computers, as well as overseeing our vocational arts program. Tyler Anderson teaches the Senior One Bible class; Marsha Coiner teaches Senior One science; Maggie Dahlman teaches Senior One math. The other classes are taught by three national teachers—Teacher Jean, Teacher Andrew, and Teacher Irene. To have patience and gentleness is my primary prayer request as I go to school each day. Problems abound as we try to motivate the students to think, not just vegetate. Part of my computer class is devoted to teaching logic. Right now we are still on the primary level problems, but many of the students are challenged to figure out the answers to simple problems like: “the class ends at 11:15. It is now twenty-five minutes before the class is to end. What time is it?” They also have problems

following directions given on a test or grammar sheet or learning vocabulary. We've had two months of school now, and I do see improvement. The students realize that they must come to school on time—even if it's raining. They need to do their homework and try their best. Yes, it's a free school, but that doesn't mean that there are low expectations. Rafiki's standards are among the highest in the country.

In fact, when Rosemary Jensen last visited Uganda a few months ago, she met with Janet Museveni, Uganda's First Lady and a Member of Parliament. Last week Mrs. Museveni's personal assistant visited our school in preparation for a week's training that starts March 5 for six of the head masters in Mrs. Museveni's district in an effort to raise the standard of education in Uganda. Our headmistress, Marsha Coiner, will be doing the training. This will be the second such training, with many more in the future. So it is with humility that Rafiki is not only reaching out to more children, but we are also sharing our teaching methods to help other schools improve their level of education. It's an exciting time for Rafiki, on the cutting edge of many changes and improvements, not only for our students but for the outreach to other schools in Uganda.

Rafiki Graduates

I continue to mentor a small group of Rafiki graduates. I've mentioned Annet and Madinah who are now starting their third month of their weaving jobs in the town of Jinja. They are doing well. I will be seeing them later this month when I take Bennah and Jaliah, two other graduates, up to meet Trish and the Kilfombera weaving staff. Bennah and Jaliah were sponsored to take a year's tailoring course at the YMCA after they graduated from the Rafiki vocational program in 2006. They have been getting practical experience with Gertrude, the local seamstress who makes the



BENNAH AND JALIAH ARE REVISING THE CUSHIONS ON THE TEACHERS' COUCH.

Rafiki uniforms, for the last two months. While working with Gertrude, Bennah and Jaliah have also come over to the Rafiki School to mend

uniforms, help revise the cushions on a couch in the teachers' lounge, as well as do some small sewing projects for me. How heart-warming it is to see these godly young ladies blossom and succeed after three years under the old Rafiki system of education.

Prayers

I also send out a monthly prayer letter highlighting some of the requests for prayer in between the quarterly newsletters. If you do not receive my prayer letter and would like to, please e-mail me at joann.neal@gmail.com and I'll be glad to add you to my e-mail list.

Prayer Praises

- Most of our new day students are settling in and starting to conform to Rafiki's high standards.
- We just added nine new children to our Rafiki "tribe" with several more awaiting approval. That brings us to over ninety resident children here.
- Our new one year teacher, Andrea, has been a true blessing.
- We have six MiniMissionaries scheduled for March.

Prayer Requests

- Our long-term weaver/trainer, Annet, has resigned. We need a qualified person to take over her responsibilities.
- Time management as I prepare for my classes, grade all the homework papers, and oversee the afternoon skill-training production.
- I meet with a lawyer next week about the check fraud from last May. Please pray that I can get some in-country resolution since my U.S. bank has denied responsibility.
- Good ROS/national teacher relationships.
- Academic success and grateful hearts for all the students, who are currently enrolled at the Rafiki School.
- Health care providers to volunteer for our medical clinics scheduled for May, September, and late November 2008.

Serving His least in Uganda,

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