

NOVEMBER 2014

Greetings from RCPUSA!

It's that time again! Time to fill you in on all the progress that Rabondo Community Project (RCPUSA) has made thanks to the generosity of supporters like you.

Priority #1: Caring for our orphans and at-risk students

For over 10 years, RCPUSA has been the sole provider for up to 36 children per year. These children are orphaned or come from homes without the means to care for them and are unable to be successful attending the day schools built by RCPUSA. For them, the successful solution has been to attend boarding school where they are able to receive supervised care and an education. RCPUSA also houses them when they are on holiday from school.

Caring for and supporting these children is our greatest priority and can be done so with surprisingly little funding. RCPUSA covers school fees, books & supplies, uniforms, personal items & boarding requirements, transportation to and from school, housing and basic welfare during school breaks, and medical and dental care. The cost is around \$1045 per child, per year. That is only \$87 per month. That is roughly what most people pay for cell phone service each month! Your support can drastically change the lives of these children. Your support can give them an education and hope they would otherwise not be able to acquire. Every bit of support helps these children achieve their dreams!

Second year begins for our first exchange student!

As school began this September, our first exchange student began her second year in Minnesota. Thanks to the great generosity of St. Therese School for donating another year of tuition and school supplies, Sheillah will be spending another year in Minnesota for

the experience of a lifetime. Sheillah is one of the children in the care of RCPUSA, coming from a deeply impoverished family due to the loss of her father in a road accident while she was still a baby. Sheillah has proven to be a dedicated student even though she is a year younger than her classmates and she is still building

her English vocabulary (English is her third language!). Sheillah and her classmates wrote poems for English class this year and Sheillah's poem, titled "West Dumpet", was selected to be published by the American Library of Poetry in a compilation called *Accolades*. Only 20% of the kids who entered the contest were selected to be published. Congratulations to Sheillah for continuing her fine work!

Sheillah's first year would not have been as successful without the generous support of one of our board members, Kelly Abernathy, and her family. Kelly and her family opened their home and their hearts to Sheillah for her first very cold year here in Minnesota. The Abernathy family helped Sheillah learn how to use the computer and iPad, how to use the library, and even how to

continued on page 2

Donor Spotlight: Joe Sanders

Sharing Our Vision Since the Beginning

This year, RCPUSA would like to celebrate the dedication of one of our long-time supporters, Mr. Joe Sanders of Florida. Mr. Sanders has supported the efforts of RCPUSA for nearly a decade. He learned of RCPUSA through others during his support of a community where his daughter, Angelia Sanders, had volunteered in the Peace Corps in Kenya. (Angelia continues her work in Africa working for the Carter Foundation.) When he visited Rabondo, he was excited to see what a small organization like RCPUSA with limited resources was able to accomplish in a village, such as Rabondo, where there was nothing before.

His support and vision have helped the people of Rabondo in many ways. First, Mr. Sanders supported the feeding program at our primary school. Until the creation of the in-school feeding program, students either did not eat during the course of the school day or they returned home to their families for lunch.



First day of school for Sheillah and two of her schoolmates (also the children of her new host family, in this, Sheillah's second academic year).

Unfortunately, we discovered that when students went home for lunch, they often found that the food was not yet prepared and could not get back to school on time. This led to many children falling behind their peers. Mr. Sanders' leading support of RCPUSA's school lunch feeding program made a tremendous difference in improving student performance.

Mr. Sanders has also supported many of our other projects. He donated generously to our Safe Water Project, seeing the tremendous benefit that clean, safe water brings to the students and villagers. He and his daughter, Angelia, also provided funds for school fees, particularly for girls, as they both realize the importance of girls' education in the developing world. He has continued his support now to include the students who have joined university studies. For example, he has supported some

continued on page 4

ride a bike! They gave her a warm place to live, helped her with homework, and took her with them to explore Minnesota and even along on vacations. RCPUSA acknowledges that this was a tremendous gift to both Sheillah and RCPUSA, but it is also a gift to the other students in Rabondo. Sheillah's successful first year in the US shows them there is a larger world out there and that they can be a part of it through their dedication to their education.

Sheillah's exchange has also been a source of enrichment for her schoolmates, teachers and the staff at St. Therese School, as they have no others in the school that are from that part of the world.

As Sheillah is one of the students in the care of RCPUSA, we continue to support her during her time in the United States. While St Therese's has generously donated the cost of tuition and some school supplies, a young student faces other costs that must be met. There are also many non-classroom activities that need funding. For example this year, the eighth grade students of St. Therese's will travel to Washington D.C. on a school trip. We are searching for funds to allow Sheillah to join her classmates on a visit to the U.S. capital and learn about the history of our great country. We need to raise about \$1200 by early spring for her to make the trip. If you are interested in helping Sheillah reach her fundraising goal, we would be very grateful. Any amount would be appreciated.

Safe water is key to life

While education is a key part of our mission at RCPUSA, so is access to safe, clean water. Safe water is incredibly important to good health. Many diseases, such as cholera and typhoid, still flourish in locations where standing water sources are shared. Our Safe Water Project, has made great strides in the past – the drilling of a bore hole, testing of water, and installation of a temporary pump and small tank.

The well is covered and uses a temporary pump which is unable to handle the need of the people of Rabondo. To complete Phase II, funds are needed for the following components:

- Part A – To build a water tower with tanks fitted with water pipes from the pump to the tanks
- Part B – To connect the water tower to the distribution points (*primary and secondary schools, health clinic, student transition home, staff living quarters, and a kiosk available for use by villagers*)
- Part C – To build a security fence to secure the water system
- Part D – To replace the temporary pump and attach electric water meter

The benefits of available, safe water cannot be understated. Students, staff, and villagers must walk great distances daily to polluted rivers to fetch water for drinking, cooking and washing. For students this is time that should be spent studying and in the classroom, and energy that hungry students should not be wasting. Safe water will also reduce, if not eliminate, water-borne

diseases such as cholera and typhoid, in this community. Also, we have built a medical clinic which cannot be opened for operation due to lack of running water. It will be able to serve the people of Rabondo once the funds are available to connect the clinic to the water tank. It is the only clinic in a twelve-mile radius in a rural setting where most people's only means of transportation is to walk. A difficult journey when you are sick or pregnant!

With your generous help, these students and all the villagers of Rabondo will be free of the burden of fetching water and be able to focus on creating a better life for themselves and their community.

Reusable pads for our female students

A few years ago our eyes were opened to an issue shared by our female students. They told us how happy they were to have a school, but were forced to miss nearly 25% of their school days due to menstruation. Because of this, we began a wonderful relationship with LunaPads helping us keep our girls in the classroom. To purchase pads to donate to RCPUSA, see LunaPads' Pads4Girls program at: <http://lunapads.com/about-us/donate-pads>.



The talented Thimble Bees Sewing Group of Wayzata Community Church with just some of the 95 kits they created.



The pads are both practical and beautiful!

While we appreciate the generosity of Luna Pads, we were honored by this year's generous donation by the Thimble Bees Sewing Group of Wayzata Community Church. The Thimble Bees initially sewed enough pads for 65 kits of reusable pads to last for the full weeklong cycle of 65 of our female students. What generosity! A board member and our exchange student Sheillah (mentioned earlier in this article) met with the Thimble Bees to receive the pads. The Thimble Bees learned about RCPUSA's work in Rabondo and of Sheillah's opportunities here in the US. They were so excited about her being here and to meet one of the Rabondo students and gave her a hat and scarf they knitted. But the Thimble Bees weren't done yet! Later RCPUSA received an additional 30 kits for a total of 95 kits! We are SO excited to send them to Rabondo this winter. This gift will help 95 young women to stay in school for the next three to five years! While seemingly small, this is the gift of education and dignity for the young women of Rabondo. Thank you to the Thimble Bees for the donation of their skills and supplies to create these pads! This is one way for others to support girls' education in Rabondo village.

Student Testimonial: Lee Ochola Charles

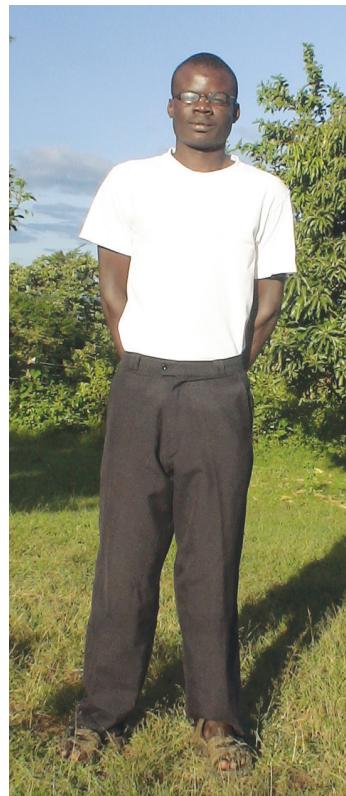
Please take a moment to read a letter from one of our orphaned students in the care of RCPUSA. We are so proud of his educational accomplishments! This could not have been achieved without the support of our generous donors.

I am Lee Ochola Charles, a Kenyan citizen living in Rabondo Village. I am currently a student at the University of Nairobi having gone through Rabondo Primary School and St. Timon's Rabondo Secondary school. As one of the beneficiaries of RCPUSA, I would like to acknowledge its effort in constructing the primary school and secondary school among other projects.

As a total orphan from a small village encroached with poverty, illiteracy and poor health care, I almost lost hopes in life at the age of ten in grade five due to countless challenges that came my way. Fortunately there came by a well-wisher, Timon Bondo (the founder of RCPUSA), to my rescue.

The RCPUSA made my life quite promising and gave me a meaningful life by providing me with all the basic needs and Education. While in both primary and secondary school, it was RCPUSA that was supporting me financially. It provided money for my school fees, learning materials including textbooks, school uniform, health care and at the same time providing me with room and board within walking distance to the school built by RCPUSA. RCPUSA also provided similar support to my four siblings. Three of us have received secondary education and two are still at the primary level.

Currently I am pursuing my degree in bachelor of commerce in the University of Nairobi. Here, too, its RCPUSA that is still responsible in supporting my education. As RCPUSA is still in its progress to improve the living standard within Rabondo village, many are now having smiles in their faces as a result of services rendered to them in various projects accomplished by the RCPUSA. I therefore would like to appreciate the RCPUSA donors for their generous contribution to the project. We are very fortunate to have your time and resources. Without your help we wouldn't have gone this far. And to those who are still willing to stretch their hands of donation to the project, please do so and be a savior and any of your single donation will not go in vain.



Student Lee Ochola Charles

When a New Culture Comes Knocking at the Door

What it's like to be a host family

Sheillah arrived on September 3, 2013, with only a few belongings. We were very excited and nervous about having her come and stay with us. We wondered what it was like for her to come here from her village. We wondered how different our home would be for her, or our neighborhood, or a simple trip to the grocery store or Target.

Upon arrival Sheillah was very quiet and shy, it took time for her to open up to us. We were careful to not overwhelm her with too many questions, but we were so curious about so many things!

Sheillah first connected with our children that are close to her age, which made us feel good. They enjoyed playing together and sharing music. They played games and Sheillah tried new things like swimming in the lake at our cabin and riding a bike.

As her time in Minnesota progressed, we really began to see her personality come out. The kids at her school noticed this transition, too. She settled in and found a comfortable place in our home and at school with her new friends.

Of course there were times that were challenging, like figuring out foods she liked and sometimes

communication was hard as there are cultural differences. Plus, just getting comfortable in that role as a parent to this new child in your home. It took time, but we found our places with each other and learned many new things about her world as she learned about ours.

Hosting a student is a big commitment for the family, but we found it very rewarding. It was nice for us to learn how close Sheillah's family is to each other and how close she is to her community and school in Rabondo. It was nice for our children to develop a friendship with someone from another country and learn from her stories about her culture and her family. In many ways, the kids discovered that even though they are growing

up in different countries, just how much they really had in common and what is truly most important... family, friends, love, having fun, and just being together and learning from each other.

Being a host family was a rewarding and learning experience. We would encourage that others would consider opening their hearts and home to a foreign student who is in pursuit of an academic dream in our country.

By Kelly Abernathy



Sheillah and the Abernathy Family at Thanksgiving



PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

To volunteer, please contact us at:
763-545-2828 or info@rcpusa.org
RCPUSA could use your skills either here or if you are visiting Kenya.

To give a monetary donation, please submit checks to:
Rabondo Community Project, USA
PO Box 27954
Minneapolis, MN 55427

PayPal is available:
www.rcpusa.org
Click 'Donate - Volunteer' tab towards the top of the page.

Find us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/rcpusa 
RCP is finally on Facebook!
See photos taken by our sponsored students and read about things that are happening in Rabondo.

Short on cash and time?
If tougher times have you left you short on cash and not travelling these days, please consider donating your unused frequent flyer miles. It takes 85,000 mile for Timon to visit Rabondo every year to view the progress of our projects.

The Rabondo Community Project USA is a 501(c) (3) organization and gifts are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

Rabondo Community Project, USA
PO Box 27954,
Minneapolis, MN 55427
Phone 763-545-2828
Fax 763-390-9184

info@rcpusa.org • www.rcpusa.org

continued from page 1

of the students who were having difficulty meeting their school and living expenses at the universities they attend.

Not only has Mr. Sander's support been monetary, he has also travelled the great distance to the village of Rabondo to visit the people who benefit from the work of RCPUSA. Visits from Americans who sit down with them, engage with them, and listen to them are encouraging to the people of Rabondo who need support. They feel they are heard and that they matter.

Mr. Sanders sat with the people of Rabondo, he has been quick to notice the work that needed to be done. During the course of his visits over the years, he has helped in many ways. While visiting Kenya this year, he made a stop in Rabondo and noticed a number of issues that needed to be taken care of immediately. Mr. Sanders is the type of person that rolls up his sleeves and dives into help, not even needing to be asked. As a handyman himself, he supervised the repair and overhaul of the drainage system in the transitional house, where our orphan students stay when on holiday from school. The refrigerator was also in need of repair and he took care of that. At the same time, the new electric bill was brought and needed to be paid immediately, as in Kenya there is no due date, you must pay when they present you with the bill. He covered the cost of the electricity bill right then and avoided the disconnection. He also noticed the transitional home had run out of food to feed the children that were arriving during their school break. He immediately went out and bought enough food to feed about 30 children for the weeks during their break. He did not wait to be asked.

Over the years, Mr. Sanders has remained engaged with RCPUSA and the people of Rabondo and has donated both his time and money. For this reason, RCPUSA wants to share our heartfelt gratitude for the dedication of Mr. Sanders and his family. Their support has indeed made a positive impact.

continued from page 2

Dining hall and kitchen

Work continues to progress on the new kitchen and dining hall project spearheaded by Father John Forliti. The building is built, but we are in need of additional funds for finishing and furnishing.

Getting Started on the Right Foot

Unfortunately, many of the children who enter school in Rabondo come from illiterate families or come without the skills to learn. This leaves children unprepared to be successful students and it is showing in test scores. To alleviate this problem, RCPUSA initiated a fundraising campaign to build and staff an Early Childhood Education Center. It is estimated that 100 students will need to be accommodated, needing three classrooms and a latrine. The fundraising campaign was able to raise enough money to buy a piece of land, bricks, sand, and timber for roofing. The rest of the money was used to fence the property. However, in order to complete the project, more money must be raised to purchase the remaining materials and pay for labor to move forward with construction.

Current Gifts

Every year, we make the hard decision to send out our annual newsletter. While we want to keep everyone informed of the progress we make every year, the cost for producing this piece is considerable. With this in mind, RCPUSA hopes that we can count on you and your financial support.

It is only with the dedication of our supporters that we can continue to better the lives of the people of Rabondo. Thank you to everyone who has helped make this another successful year. We appreciate your support which is helping to give hope and dignity to the village of Rabondo. To find out how you can volunteer or contribute, please contact us at www.rcpusa.org (or via other contact info listed on this page). Any amount of donation will be greatly appreciated! Our work is impossible without your tax-deductible contributions to RCPUSA.