

TOFTA & LORDS MEADE NEWSLETTER - January 2006

Welcome!

Welcome to my first attempt at a newsletter for the Tofta Educational Trust and Lords Meade Vocational College. I take this opportunity to thank all those of you who have so kindly supported the very needy work of both the Tofta Educational Trust (TET) as well as the Lords Meade Vocational College (LMVC).

In 2005 TET was able to assist 139 needy students in furthering either their secondary or tertiary education, and LMVC grew to 620 students who were able to enjoy the growing facilities at the College.

The College.

The students left for their long annual break at the beginning of December, and the new academic year starts at the beginning of February.

Meanwhile some work is being carried out on repainting of some of the buildings, and more work is being carried out in the sorting of the library.

Counselor from Germany: Judith Blank arrived in October 2005 for a six month period as a volunteer at Lords Meade Vocational College. She has been counseling the students at LMVC, where she has met children with very different problems from her native Germany. She has been actively involved with the students since her arrival in October. Thanks Judith for your contribution towards assisting and educating the needy children of Uganda.

Volunteers from Wolverhampton.

We are delighted to have received two more volunteers for the College, who are Val Chivers's son Sam and Holly Laceby, a girl from Wolverhampton Grammar School. They arrived last Saturday! We hope their six months stay with us will be appreciated by the students of the College, and that they will enjoy their time here at Lords Meade.

Farnfield Medical Centre



Left: Domestic science students make up beds in the Farnfield Medical Centre.
Right: Dan Farnfield plants a tree to commemorate the opening of the Farnfield Medical Centre. Vanessa, his mother, looks on. Vanessa & Dan raised the money for the Farnfield Medical Centre.



In August 2005 the opening of the long awaited Farnfield Medical Centre was carried out by Hon. Dr. Alex Kamugisha, Minister of State for Primary Health Care. Vanessa and Dan Farnfield, along with Dan's girlfriend and brother, and Vanessa's sister and friend were present, having flown from England a few days before in time to help with the final painting. The Medical Centre now provides good medical facilities, including a well equipped laboratory, to the students and staff at Lords Meade. When the bureaucracy of registering the Medical Centre has been overcome then the Medical Centre will be opened for the public and offer better medical facilities than are currently available within the community.

A very big 'thank you' to Vanessa and Dan for all their hard work in fundraising, and to numerous individuals who so kindly donated items for the Medical Centre.

Stanbic Bank

Recently we were delighted to have a surprise visit by two 'big men' of Stanbic Bank (Uganda) who came to have a look at the College. They appeared impressed and made some encouraging comments. They were especially interested in the lack of beds in the girls' dormitory. We sincerely hope that the visit will bring some good results in the future!

Weddings

One of our directors, Peter Kalibbala, married his fiancée, Ruth, in a magnificent ceremony held in Jinja in August. One of our drivers, James Wakabi, married his fiancée, Annette, in December. We wish both couples well in their future together.

Births



Joshua Kalibbala with his great-great aunt (aged 93) and Ruth, Peter's wife at Peter's family home near Masaka.

Joshua Kalibbala was born on 11th November at Jinja Hospital to Peter and Ruth. Reports indicate that he sleeps well during the day but not so much at night, keeping his parents on their toes! He is growing fast!

Starehe Boys Centre Old Boys.

It is encouraging that Starehe Boys Center Old Boys are starting to bring in their children to Lords Meade. It is now nearly 30 years since the Founder, John Kirkwood, first went to teach at Starehe in Nairobi. He greatly enjoys meeting his old students who are now parents of teenage students.

Donations

We have been so fortunate in the last year with the following donations – a mere 'thank you, we appreciate your support' seem so small, but those are the best words we can come up with.

- i) Rotary Club of Wilmette, Illinois, U.S.A. donated 24 beds for the new Rotaract dormitory in the form of 8 triple decker beds. Another 24 girls can now board at the College.
- ii) Rotary Club of Jinja gave us a borehole and water tank worth U.S.\$ 27,000 – this was done in conjunction with the Rotary Clubs of Escondido Sunrise and San Diego, California.
- iii) Again the Rotary Clubs of Jinja and Poway, California gave us a donation of U.S.\$ 7,000 for the purchase of text books. This has greatly boosted the level of the library.
- iv) Again the Rotary Clubs of Jinja and Bolton Lever donated home economics kitchen equipment worth U.S.\$ 7,000.
- v) We are awaiting the arrival of another generous donation from the Rotary Clubs of Jinja, in conjunction with Colima, Mexico and Odiham & Hook, U.K. It is rumored that U.S.\$7,500 worth of sewing and knitting machines and other practical goodies are 'on their way'!
- vi) A whole container of educational goodies arrived in October courtesy of Val Chivers and the entire Wolverhampton Grammar School. The Rotary Club of Wolverhampton was also involved in collecting the items and arranging for the shipping of the container. Computers, T.V.s & video decks, sports equipment including table-tennis tables and items for the home economics department as well as boxes of books greatly boosted our equipment levels.
- vii) On Christmas Eve 2 car loads of sports shoes and uniforms arrived courtesy of the Rotary Club of Beaverton, Oregon and long term friends, Tom and Kendra Lwebuga of Nike at Portland. When the term starts at the beginning of February these items will be ready for the students.

Again, a mere 'Thank you' seems so little compared to the blessings that we are receiving.

UNEB Exams November 2005

Both the UNEB 'O' & 'A' level exams passed off without any problems. It was great to see our first 'through' group sitting their 'O' level exams 4 years after the start of the College. It was especially exciting to see the first Tofta students going through and to look at pictures of them when they first arrived! We are justifiably proud of the young men and women leaving their 'O' levels behind – we hope for good results

when the 'O' level results come out in February. We hope that many of them will return to Lords Meade to do their 'A' level course. The students have also been striving for the better having been given a chance of education and they are realizing their dreams come true. Again, many thanks to those of you who have assisted these young people to get another step in their education.

2006 Preparations.

We are already preparing for the 2006 academic year and the registration of new students is going on. We are catering for both national and international students.

Sports

Lords Meade Vocational College is very active in games and sports. The past year had various competitions in different games on inter-house level. Nationally we are represented by Jolly Mbabazi in S4, who features for the under 18 national girls cricket team. Our boys ranked 7th while the girls ranked 5th in the country. We have taken part in the National Cricket Competitions two years running – a fact that we are very proud of. Meanwhile sports such as football, rugby, basketball and volley ball are all enjoyed by the students and we enjoy good rankings in the local Njeru schools

James Ntulume

I have joined the Tofta Educational Trust to replace James Ntumume who has now left Tofta to do other things in Kampala. We wish him well in his future.

Northern Uganda



Students from Northern Uganda. All of these youth have served in the Lords Resistance Army for periods from 4 months up to 8 years. Bosco, seated, lost his leg in September. Christine, 3rd right, lost her eye in a skirmish. They now enjoy the peace of Lords Meade.

In October I was fortunate to accompany Founder & Director John Kirkwood for a weekend in Northern Uganda, where we visited ex LMVC & Tofta student Henry Kasirye who is now studying at Gulu University on Government sponsorship. Henry organized for us to visit one of the Internally Displaced Peoples' Camps just outside Gulu. Hundreds of children followed us as we were taken round some of the camp by the local leaders. While the inhabitants seem to be resigned to their existence in those terrible conditions it was daunting to think about what the future holds for all the teenagers there who will have no access to secondary education. The leader pointed out that what primary schools that there are, have 1 teacher for between 150 to 200 students. The leader pointed out some of the teenage girls who have babies – he commented that there was precious little else for the girls to do to earn a few shillings.

Later we moved to Lira where we visited the Rachele Centre for children who have returned from years of being abducted by the Lords Resistance Army. Teenage boys and girls struggle to give an idea of the traumas they have been through. The social workers and the head, Els de Temmerman, do a fantastic job of rehabilitating these badly scarred children.

During our visit we met Bosco Okello, a boy of about 21 years. He was abducted by the rebels as he left for Lira to collect money for his school fees in January 1998, and spent over 8 years with them before he was shot in both legs and left for dead. He managed to crawl to a swamp where he managed to survive for 2 weeks before he was found and taken to the local authorities. He was taken to the army camp at Pader where the army doctor had to amputate his left leg below his knee. He was taken to Rachele Centre, where the authorities took him to Kampala for another operation on his gangrenous leg. He very nearly died. After a month in hospital in Kampala he returned to Rachele Centre where we met him.

We were allowed to take him away to Jinja so that he could go to a local hospital with the aim of obtaining a prosthetic leg through a Rotary Jaipur limb project. Unfortunately due to his wounds this was not achieved before Christmas, but it is hoped that he will return for the final fitting as he starts Senior 1 again.

I was fortunate to be able to spend time with him and listen to him talk about some of his experiences. He denies killing anyone but does confess to being forced to beat a fellow abductee very badly. While we spent time together he said: 'I did not know anyone could love me again!'

He is one of the more fortunate youth of Northern Uganda who will probably be able to get some education and have a better future.

He hopes to join Lords Meade in February and join the other 20 disadvantaged children from Northern Uganda whom Lords Meade and Tofta are assisting.

Assistance

Do you know anyone who might be interested in assisting a needy child to further their education and become an asset not only to their community, but also their family and country? The Tofta Office is always ready to take up offers of assistance.

Conclusion

I conclude this newsletter by thanking everyone who has supported both the Tofta Educational Trust and the Lords Meade Vocational College. Each and every contribution is greatly appreciated as it helps the Trust to further its objectives of *'Educating the less Fortunate'*

I wish you all a very happy and prosperous 2006.

Joseph Kirigwajjo

Director's message.

I take this opportunity to send my best wishes for 2006 to all our supporters. I sincerely thank all those who have so generously supported us with our endeavours to bring a better future to a few of the very needy children of Uganda and Kenya. So often I am rewarded by meeting up with an old student whom I was able to help sometime in the past and to see them 'flying high' and caring for not only their own family but also those of a deceased sibling.

Requests for assistance come so often – today I had a phone call from an organization that deals with children returning from being abducted by the Lords Resistance Army – can TOFTA offer any assistance to these badly scarred children who so desperately need some 'normality' in their lives. I have also met the lady in charge of one of the local orphanages – she has about 10 children who have finished their primary education and currently have little hope of affording a place in a secondary school. It costs 270 pounds a year, or US\$400, about 66 pence Sterling a day, or \$1.10 a day to give a child a chance in their life. While I know most recipients of this newsletter are already giving most generously, I wonder if anyone knows someone who might be interested in giving a child a future.

With love and best wishes to each and everyone.

John Kirkwood.

Director

For further information please contact: Hon. Secretary, Tofta Educational Trust, 17 Sion Hill, Bristol BS8 4AZ, UK
Or: Josephine Okello at toftatrust@yahoo.com or look at the website at www.lordsmeade.org