



Newsletter April 2018

Dear Friends,

Hello everyone. It's that time to send you all an update on our progress and what's happening with The Giving Circle locally and internationally!

Special Message from the President

This first quarter has proven to be a time of remarkable accomplishment. So many projects that began with modest steps are now reaching an admirable maturity.

In Uganda, the good news just keeps coming:

- An increasing number of our sponsorship program children are entering high school.
- Our first class of students at Kagoma Gate passed their qualifying exams to move on to the next levels. It's so remarkable for a village that had no school at all only a few years ago.
- Our students at Busoga all passed their qualifying exams as well.
- Our micro-lending bank passed all financial audits and is now a certified branch/affiliate of the Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB).
- Our birthing center and nurse/midwife has resulted in the first year of no deaths in Kagoma Gate from preventable diseases, diarrhea, or childbirth.
- Our sustainable farming projects provide the villagers with both healthy food and marketable goods for sale.

At the same time, we are launching more ambitious projects that could become the basis for long term educational improvement throughout Uganda.

Here in the US, we accomplished what seemed impossible – we've responded to three major hurricanes in close order. At this point, we are focusing our ongoing efforts on the locations that most need our help: Florida, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. In all cases, we team up with a local organization who can serve as "feet on the ground" to assure that needed supplies and funds are well used to help those most in need. For example:

- Our Operation Caribbean Christmas brought holiday joy to hundreds of families in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands and we continue to support them.
- We've shipped school supplies and student backpacks to rural St. Croix schools that badly needed them.
- We continue to send money to our local partner in the Virgin Islands to help them rebuild destroyed homes – most of which have little more than a FEMA tarp for roofs.

Locally, our outreach team continues to help the homeless in Saratoga County – both through direct action and through supporting Code Blue Saratoga.

I invite you to read more about these exciting projects both in this newsletter at in The Giving Circle posts in both Facebook and our web site <https://www.thegivingcircle.org>.

Please feel free to contact us if you would like to volunteer for our local rebuilding efforts, help in Uganda, assist with fundraising or if you have any other questions about the Giving Circle. We can be reached at (518) 469-6769 or by email at info@thegivingcircle.org.

Looking forward to working with you all in the near future!

Leo Geoffrion, TGC President

Fundraisers - SAVE THE DATE!

Afghanistan Fundraiser

Join us at Caffe Lena on Saturday, April 21st, at 1pm for a screening of the incredible documentary *Girl Rising*. See the stories of 9 young girls around the world and the obstacles they face and overcome to get an education. Hear from Nangyalai Attal, who has made it his life's work to fight for equality for women in education in Afghanistan, and Mursal Ayobi, a survivor of the 2016 attack on American University of Afghanistan. Enjoy authentic Afghan cuisine from local restaurants.

Admission fee: \$25 donation per person, payable at the door or in advance online at www.caffelena.org/events-calendar/.

Summit Clothing Company Fundraiser

Join us at Saratoga Winery on Sunday, May 20 from 4-7pm. Admission fee: \$20 per person available online at summitclothingcompany.com. More in the below section on the Summit Forest. There will be live music, food, silent auction, games, and it's family friendly. All proceeds go to our Summit Forest sustainability project in Uganda.

Human Rights Symposium

The Giving Circle and the [Capital Region Institute for Human Rights](#) are partnering again to bring you the 2018 Teen Summer Symposium on Human Rights, a three-day workshop open to incoming freshmen through graduating seniors, who are interested in history, social justice, politics, and international relations. The goals of the Teen Summer Symposium are to provide participants with a deeper understanding of human rights history and humanitarian issues today and inspire them to have a positive impact on the world.

We are very proud to be part of this event! Click [here](#) to register!

TGC Outreach Team

We are so proud of our outreach team comprised of 3 amazing women: Rachael Dwyer, Patti Riggi, and Melissa Renee. Our team hosted The Giving Circle's Outreach Christmas Eve party for our homeless friends/family. This team provides year-round help for the homeless including providing dinners, supplies, clothing etc. Volunteers are always needed. Please check out the volunteer web site for dates and times needed for help at www.codebluesaratoga.org.

The Giving Circle Africa

All of our African programs are designed with a goal of being **100% self sustainable in operation and growth**. We do do this in many ways from working to expand sustainable plants, animals and fish farming, small businesses like our sewing business and more.

- **Midwife Programs**

This years trip featured a great deal of work and planning for 2018 projects. Here are our US teammates, some of which this trip was their first time! The trip also featured several very special events.

The first part of the trip included the return of Hope Stevens Neikirk and Caren Baker, who are the heart and soul behind our nurse/midwife program and operation of our Kagoma Gate clinic. On this trip they also did some outreach work. Also joining us was their good friend and supporter (also a nurse), Sue Stewart, for her first time (and not her last)! Hope and Caren saw the huge improvements and amazing growth of our projects since their last trip. They saw a very healthy Kagoma Gate village which is largely due to their tireless efforts along with our supporters.



The next clinic was held in a very poor village outside of Kagoma Gate. There were well over 100 people seen and the lives of 2 old women saved. One woman required surgery which we were able to arrange. The other poor old woman was in such pain and was suffering. This old woman our midwife, Elizabeth, kept constant care of her after spending several days in the hospital. We brought her back to her hut with a mattress so that she would not be on the ground. This woman will not recover, but she will be loved and be in less pain for her last days.



A message from Caren & Hope: "It was amazing to witness first hand the difference from our last visit to Kagoma Gate. There were the concrete changes that included the new birth clinic, an incinerator, new latrines, apartments for teachers under construction and the school's new kitchen. There were harder to measure improvements but equally impressive. Elizabeth is more confident and trusted and better utilized. The improved general health of the villagers is apparent. We met a woman whose baby was in the wrong position for a natural birth and after Elizabeth identified this problem she worked with the woman to change the baby's position. We heard yesterday her techniques worked and the woman had a healthy baby vaginally! There are so many great stories! What did not change from our last visit was the overwhelming privilege and honor we felt by being a part of this great endeavour. It was just as wonderful to be with TGCA Uganda team who remain inspirational and wise and devoted to all of TGCA's projects."

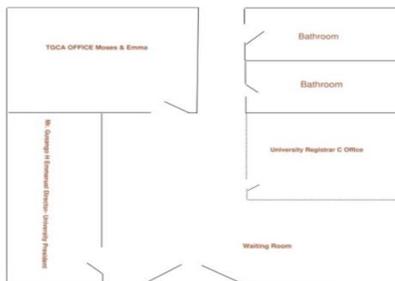
• **2018 Uganda Travel Team & Summer Fundraising Project - June trip planning underway!**

Last year we started a new tradition where we work together to raise funds to complete a project that will be dedicated to the team of that year. Last year it was the fence around our Kagoma Gate compound. Even if you cannot make the trip this year donations are, of course, **most welcome**.

This years project is the completion of the new The Giving Circle office and will also be the office of a very special project in development now: *The KoiKoi Teachers University*. Much of the work is completed already with only the finishing touches needing to be done: the tile, celling, wooden wall to create a new office space for Madam Cecilia Kagya, University's Registrar, paint to make it a beautiful office and furnishings befitting **The Giving Circle Africa and Koi Koi Teachers University**. To donate to the summer team project, click [here](#)!



A special plaque will be placed on the exterior of the building in honor of all 2018 Summer Team Trip contributors, just like this one! Also, the layout of the office looks like this!



• **Koi Koi Teachers' University**

We had 2 days of our Giving Circle Teachers University Conference Workshop on the 29th & 30th of February in Uganda. It started with Mark's presentation of a vision, a plan we believe can really change the education process in the 3rd world. Doing so for the first time in a logical, functional, and effective way for all children. We will first begin in the Busoga region and then spread out like ripples in a pond through Uganda. After that, Africa and the whole 3rd world!

The US and western world has tried in many ways, with good hearts, but in the wrong way. They did this by trying to force cultures, systems, countries, teaching styles and teachers on them which are not ready or skilled enough to use these systems and curriculum.

All these attempts for so long failed, because they did not 1- start at the bottom, and, 2 - did not ask and include the Ugandans (or any 3rd world schools for that matter) what **THEY** need, what is the good within their curriculum and where is it lacking. We can NOT know another country better then the people of that country, never. We have teachers in poor school in Uganda and 3rd world countries who can not spell, or read, can not teach simple math, and they are the one's teaching the children. This is like a truck suck in the mud with wheels spinning, never able to move forward.

The TGC KOI KOI Teachers University:

- will become the first Teachers University working with, not new teachers, but with the poorly educated teachers starting with the first 10 “ripple” schools.
- most importantly, this will feature is a hybrid curriculum, a curriculum based in the Ugandan standards, blended and enhanced with the proper western US teaching tools and systems, creating the first hybrid curriculum that fits the shortfalls in the Ugandan system.
- Mark planted this vision in [Moses Wambi](#) and Mr. Gusango Hamfrey last June and then he sat back and watched the seed start to germinate and over the last months. They starting to form the base for this University. This conference features some of the most dedicated, educational leaders in Uganda who all (thank goodness) agree and are so excited believing in this system.
- This is a seed that was planted and like any seed, it takes time to grow. The MOST important thing is this is organic. This will be lead by the Ugandans with support and not us forcing what we think is right.
- For the first 5, the school will be conducted at our Busoga school during school vacations and when students are gone. They will sleep in the boarding rooms and eat from our kitchen. These poor, undereducated teachers in early education, baby school and primary school will come from our first 10 “ripple” team schools. They will also attend for free and their advanced degree will come only at the cost of staying and teaching at the poorer school to lift the children.
- these, now better-advanced, educated teachers will now read well, spell well, understand math and will have the tools to teach it correctly to the children.
- we will include a more advanced science system now seen in Uganda but one of the teachers can understand and teach to the children. Also included are Chess, Sign Language, programs for disabled and special needs children, Scrabble, [Lourds Lane](#) Superyou program of self-belief and more!



The goal is an early education system which will be sent to the baby school classes children which is far advanced, already understanding letters, numbers etc and from the baby school system will advance children to primary school already reading and skills far advanced from what is the norm today. This will enable the children to be ready for P7 national exams and the candidates WILL pass their tests at the highest 1 and 2 levels.

This places these children in better high schools already ahead of other students. From this, students will graduate high school national test scores with more and more students eligible to attend college.

A seed is planted in the ground not in the air. For this we need to start with the primary teachers, we need this seed to be organic and watered and cared for by the Ugandans with some help from us. Not like in the past where money is thrown at systems blindly or wasted on programs too advanced or not fitting.

In time, this seed will become a mighty tree with endless fruit.

We will post on our web site soon the presentation given at this conference and our plan. From the plan, the Ugandans are in break out groups starting to construct this school, THEIR school and future.

Mark will come home with their work to start working on our part: building the US-side of this hybrid curriculum. We will be seeking teachers and friends to help and make presentations to foundations, writing grants and looking for a foundation and US college that will be our partner. The cost of this program will be pennies compared to how it was attempted in the past.

In 5 years we hope to start our own stand-alone **TGC KOI KOI Teachers University** teaching new and existing teachers this new hybrid curriculum. This will “ripple” through the 3rd world, making each program organic and they lead the development of their hybrid curriculum.

Whatever your belief system is, we are the children of one source and all brothers and sisters, all family who should treat everyone as you wish to be treated.

• TGCA Chess Programs

The Giving Circle Africa continues to teach chess in both its Busoga and Kagoma Gate Schools. The children embrace the game as a fun challenge, and gives them the opportunity to visit other parts of Uganda. For the teachers, it's a very effective means to teach logic and problem solving skills. We wanted to include an essay one of our Chess Scholarship winners wrote below!

CHESS ESSAY By NABONGO PETER:

Chess covers more than three quarters of my daily life. Yesterday when I turn my ribs on my warm mattress to kick off the bed sheets with holes so as to have a clear look on sun's rays outside, I make sure firing a prayer to the Almighty to bless me and above all give me success in the game of chess. Initially chess wasn't part of my life in school and all those who played chess looked like lunatics and chess playing was a cat and mice to me. The need for exploring drove me into playing chess and above all the hearing of kakiri. This made blood run in my temple thinking whether I should join the chess club or not.

Would you continue playing chess if you were beaten using a fool's meat? Guess what? I carried the shame and came back the next morning to play but willing to resist the next move. Lucky enough I made this revenge but unfair on another beginner who landed in the teeth of an angry lion. The laughter for this act gave me thirst to hammer more people including those who taught me the game.

I have realized chess isn't simply a game; brain boost, visiting many places, fame and getting multiple friends are one of the benefits. Enjoyment and chilling off stress is inclusive. I can't accept any bed-bag (bug) to have a gulp of my blood without building a couple moves because I want to be a superstar who hopes no to find any challenger anywhere on the universe.

"Talent is gold" they say, I hope that I will get a lot from chess including academic sponsorships open me to nations and the like.

I hope to find more and great in playing chess even in my secondary school to come.

By NABONGO PETER

NOTE: When we met Peter, he couldn't spell his name. 5 years haven't been in vain. His mum is crazy and hardly sustains a constructive conversation. He's a child of rape. Interestingly the mother one attempted to fix a coin in a phone. And when asked of her telephone number, she mentioned the name of the telecom company. A volunteer at the time was thrown into endless laugh at the two

• The Summit Forest

The Summit Forest is a project in Uganda that is being coordinated with The Giving Circle Organization. The Summit Forest is a 125 acre eucalyptus tree farm where 100% of every dollar made from the harvests will benefit the numerous Summit Clothing Company and The Giving Circle sustainability projects. A steady stream of revenue will be produced once the trees are mature enough to start the thinning process. Locally, the economy will see a spike due to an increase in job availability and The Summit Forest will help mitigate the soil runoff that dilutes the Nile river.

Our goal with this Forest is to supply enough revenue to the point where we can expand our outreach to neighboring villages. Our partnership with The Giving Circle Organization has given us the ability to donate to something we know will make an impact in the lives of those who need our help. The Giving Circle can turn the world's poorest, most uneducated areas into flourishing communities in a matter of a few years. They have already done this twice with the Busoga and Kagoma Gate villages in Uganda. Through The Giving Circle's presence there are hundreds of children that are fed, clothed and well educated. Their design for sustainable village construction is incredibly effective and can fit in anywhere. The Summit Forest is going to accelerate their expansion and enable them to help more lives at a faster rate. The Summit Forest is predicted to clear \$3.2 million in the first 12 years; all of which will go directly to the projects. Click [here](#) to donate!



• Bobbi Keating Nursing Scholarship

The already inadequate health systems of Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, have been badly damaged by the migration of their health professionals. There are 57 countries with a critical shortage of healthcare workers, a deficit of 2.4 million doctors and nurses. Africa has 2.3 healthcare workers per 1000 population, compared with the Americas, which have 24.8 healthcare workers per 1000 population. Only 1.3% of the world's health workers care for people who experience 25% of the global disease burden.

In the bush areas such as Uganda's Kagoma Gate village, before The Giving Circle entered, this village had never seen a nurse or doctor. Today Kagoma Gate village, once Uganda's poorest village, thanks to people like you who support the Giving Circle's work, has clean water, sanitation, a school and a clinic.

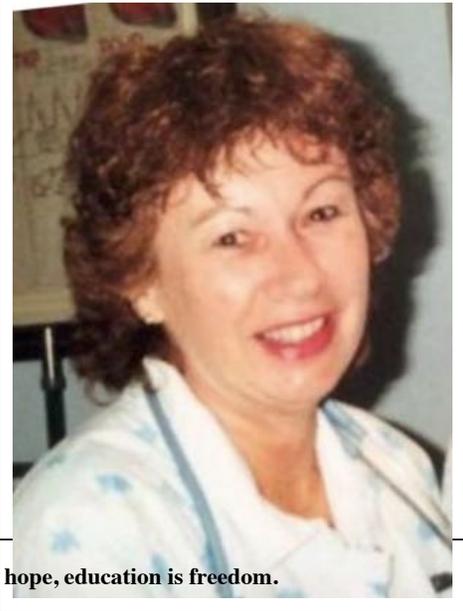
ONE Child dies every 60 seconds because of **malaria**. Every day **diarrhea kills 2195 children**. Every day, approximately **830 women die** from preventable causes related to *pregnancy and childbirth*.

This was the norm in a village like Kagoma Gate and countless villages like it. Thanks to The Giving Circle clinic in 2017, for the first time in the village's history, not one child died from malaria, diarrhea nor a mother or child die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.

For medical care, villagers, children, the old, and the injured will walk for hours from other areas to clinics like ours and can overwhelm our small staff.

The cost of nursing school is simply out of the reach for the many young girls and men who wish to live their dream of being a nurse and help serve their people.

The [Bobbi Keating Nursing Scholarship](#), with your kind and loving help, can change this for these aspiring nurses and save lives.



These and so much more - check out the [blog](#) for more details and pictures of our progress! **Education is hope, education is freedom.**

To sign up to receive our newsletters or to volunteer, please click [here](#).

First Ever Kagoma Gate Graduation!

During the winter trip, we had two special graduations at our schools. The moving up of our P7 students to High School which is something that only a small percentage of Ugandan children will attain. At our Busoga school, every single candidate passed their national exam and are headed to high school! The event featured new special tee-shirts, diplomas, four (4) scholarship winners, and lots of happiness and smiles.



Next graduation is what we have all been waiting for these last 6 years, and the villagers of Kagoma Gate waited for generations! We had the very 1st graduation of a child from this village at our school. Not just one child, **but 37 out of 38 passed their national exam!** This kind of success is unheard of in even the well-established schools!

We are very proud of our children!

On a funny note, you can see Moses & Liam are tired out!



Amazon Smile Program

The Amazon Foundation now has a way for registered users to donate 0.5% of their purchases to the registered charity of their choice. The Giving Circle is now registered to participate in the program. All proceeds from the Amazon Smile program will be used toward the operating expenses of the Koi Koi House orphanage. Participating is easy and only requires a one-time setup by going to [Amazon Smile Set Up](#) and logging into your regular Amazon account. You will need to choose The Giving Circle, Inc. in Saratoga Springs, NY as your charity of choice, but you will only need to do this step once. Donations are only activated when you purchase at smile.amazon.com, so be sure to change the bookmarks & favorites on all your devices. [Click here](#) for more information on the program.



All of these projects were done by volunteers of The Giving Circle!

Sincerely,
The Giving Circle Team
www.thegivingcircle.org

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