



As I write this article I have just returned from a trip to Uganda to visit Circle of Peace School. COPI Board Chair Betty Allen and I visited October 19-29 to pave the way for constructing a new building at the School that will house two classrooms, a new Boys Dormitory, a Library, and a Staff Lounge. The School is desperately in need of the new classrooms. Enrollment at the school has risen from 300 students in 2015 to over 400 students this year in Nursery through Primary 7. Two temporary classrooms were erected and furnished prior to the commencement of classes this year but the permanent building is what is needed.

Betty and I took lots of school supplies, clothes, shoes, and medical supplies. Thanks to all of you who responded to our email alert to donate goods and/or funds to pay for transporting a suitcase. We took 7 suitcases!

In response to recent presentations I have given to the St. Michael’s Episcopal Church Women’s Group (Hopewell, VA) and to the Virginia Retired Teachers Association we are moving forward on several fronts. Funds have been provided to repave the driveway at the school, re-roof two class rooms, and repair the latrines. We are working to have a volunteer teacher at the school each term to work with the staff and the students, further develop our pen pal programs between students at Circle of Peace School and grade school children in the U.S., and we are actively recruiting sponsors for the 70+ students who are not able to pay school fees either because they are orphaned, abandoned or come from homes with very low income.

Helping to carry out our programs are a host of new volunteers and board members. Pamela Vanias, who previously was a volunteer teacher at Circle of Peace School, has joined the board as the Director of Programs. She is working with Kate McCullough (Pen Pal Program Manager) Erika Guedes (Service Learning Program Manager) and MJ Ebenhack (Student Sponsor Program Manager) to move all these effort forward.

Our Communications Director Kate Hooper is supervising a great group of volunteers including Aditi Singh (Social Media Manager), Dena McElwain (Webmaster), Stefka Gavena (Communications Associate) Jamie McGovern (Brand Strategist), August Kunnecke (IT and Database Manager), and Joyce Nelson (Photo Archivist).

Thank you again for your interest, financial support, and personal contributions to keep dreams alive in the hearts of a growing number of precious children at Circle of Peace School in Uganda.

Kind regards, *Joanita Senoga*

Teachers affect eternity; they can never tell where their influence stops.

Henry Adams, historian

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Joanita Senoga, center, with her sister MaryLove and her mother Amina at COPS in October.



Students Needing Sponsors



Tracy

I am 12 years old and I am in Primary 6. My favorite subjects are mathematics and science. I also love to read storybooks. I am in the School Choir and the Dance and Drama Club. When I grow up, I want to become a teacher. My favorite colors are pink and green. My favorite foods are rice, posho and beans. I thank Circle of Peace School for helping me stay in school.



Abel

I am 11 years old and in Primary 3. My favorite subjects are English and social studies. My favorite colors are red and white—the colors of our school uniform. I love to read storybooks, play soccer and draw pictures. When my parents died, a Pastor adopted me. He earns very little so he cannot afford to educate me or his own children. Circle of Peace School has waived the tuition so we can receive an education.

What a bargain! Changing a Life, Changing the World for as little as \$25 month

By MJ Ebenhack, COPI Student Sponsor Program Manager

Just \$25 month is all it takes to ensure that a child at Circle of Peace School receives a quality education. That's right, \$25 a month covers the cost of tuition, books, supplies, uniform and meals for students like

Abel, an orphan

Evah, whose father is disabled and thus unemployed

Newton, who was abandoned by his parents and is being raised by his grandmother

Treasure, whose mother works at a very low-paying job

Throughout Africa, primary education is “free” but students must pay fees to cover the cost of books, uniforms and classroom supplies. Children who cannot pay are not allowed in school. Thus, almost 40% of all primary school-age children in the world are not in school. Ten million students in sub-Saharan Africa drop out of primary school each year. COPI has set out to change this reality one child at a time.

It is tragic when a child is turned away from school. It was the tears in the eyes of her pupils being forced to leave school that motivated Joanita Senoga to start Circle of Peace School in 1994, a school that never rejects a student that wants to learn, regardless of their ability to pay.

Because about a third of the students attending Circle of Peace School are too poor to pay for their education, COPI asks for your help. Currently, we have 22 individuals or families that are sponsoring students. But we have 75 students who need help with school costs.

Most of our current sponsors are paying \$400 annually to support an orphaned or abandoned child living at the School in the boys or girls dormitory. What is needed now is people who can contribute \$300 (payable in monthly installments of \$25 if desired) to support a non-residential student.

Student sponsors are provided with a picture and brief profile of their student. A couple times a year students send letters to their sponsors, telling in their own words what is happening at the school and how they are progressing.

It's easy to get started. Just decide whether you would like to support a boy or a girl. Decide whether you would like to support a residential or a commuting student. Decide how you would like to pay: annually, quarterly, or monthly. COPI can help you set up automatic recurring payments. Pictures and profiles of students needing a sponsor can soon be found on the COPI website: <http://www.circleofpeaceintl.org/#!/sponsor-a-student/cloya>.

Imagine a childhood where your parents don't read to you because they either can't afford books or lack the ability to read themselves. That is the reality for many children in Uganda.

Circle of Peace School students can also be supported through Givology.org (<http://givology.org/>). This site will accept any amount of money and add it to other donations to come up with the total needed to sponsor a student. For the last six years COPI has been partnering with Givology.

By sponsoring a Circle of Peace School student you can help to end the cycle of illiteracy and ensure that he or she has the chance for a better life. If you have been blessed with the ability to make positive changes in the world we encourage you to consider sponsoring a student at Circle of Peace School.



Thanks for the Amazon Smile Contributions

Thanks to all of you who have designated COPI for their [AmazonSmile](#) donations. A small portion of your purchase (0.5% of the purchase price before tax and shipping) has been received by Circle of Peace International. Visit [AmazonSmile](#) for program details.

Updates from Circle of Peace School

by Mary Love Bbaale, Headmistress



As I write, students at Circle of Peace School are in the middle of their third and last term of the year. This has been a big year for Circle of Peace School. We once again have a Primary 7 class which just sat for the Primary Living Examination (PLE). How well they do on the exams determines not only whether they can enroll in secondary school but reflects on the quality of instruction at our school. Tutors have worked with the students to help them do their very best on the tests.

Other teachers and students are studying hard for exams as well – exams that determine whether students pass on to the next grade. Midterm exams indicated that most students have improved compared to beginning of the year.

Again this year we were able to take all of our students on field trips. The nursery school toured around Kampala and the primary students toured around Jinja.

Our students have participated in a number of local and national competitions this year. The nursery school competed in pre-primary games for which they got second place! In June the children had a Mega School Competition. They took fifth place. Unfortunately, we didn't place high enough to go to Nairobi, Kenya.

In August, students from Circle of Peace's Tourism and Wildlife Club exhibited artwork and recited the poem "The Beauty of Our City" at a summit held at a neighboring school. The whole day was focused on the environment and wildlife.

This year students have been writing Pen Pal letters to children at St. Andrew's School in Richmond, VA and Children's Aid College Prep Charter School in Bronx, NY. Our children really enjoy getting letters from children in the United States.

We were blessed to have Monica Gilsanz with us for much of the second term. She was a hardworking lady. She was of great help in the office, in classrooms, and working individually with the kids. P.7 students miss her a lot! We hope to have teachers from the United States volunteering at our school year round.

The generosity of friends in the United States has enabled us to recently pave our driveway. The students are so happy. They don't have to walk in the mud anymore (whenever it rained we faced the challenge of students falling in the mud!). Funds channeled through COPI have also allowed us to reroof a classroom, renovate a bathroom, put up a basketball hoop, install drainage covers, fence the playground and tackle a number of maintenance and repair projects. We are very grateful for the refurbished laptops that Joanita and Betty recently delivered to the school along with various school supplies. We are also grateful to COPI for funding internet access for a year and providing us with a good camera. This makes communication much easier.

Once again, thank you for the great support. We appreciate it!



Students at St. Andrew's School in Richmond, VA sell slap bands to raise money for their friends at Circle of Peace School.

Like-minded schools forge inextricable links

by Kathy Tappan
Second grade teacher, St. Andrew's School, Richmond,

Once again, the second grade students at St. Andrew's School in Richmond, Virginia worked to raise money for Circle of Peace School, the focus of their annual service project. This spring, the students sold St. Andrew's School slap bands and raised nearly \$300 to provide nutritious meals for their friends at Circle of Peace School.

Africa and Uganda have been the focal point of second grade's cultural study since Dr. Cynthia Weldon-Lassiter travelled to Uganda to visit Circle of Peace School in the summer of 2012. Each year, the second graders not only learn about African through literature and multi-media resources, but also, and more importantly, they learn about another culture first-hand from children their own age through a letter exchange with the students at Circle of Peace School.

Over the past four years, St. Andrew's School and Circle of Peace School have become inextricably linked as the like-minded missions of our schools and the hearts of our students are connected. As a teacher, it is a true blessing to witness the power that academic, social, and spiritual education provides to the children as they value, respect, and love one another across the thousands of miles that separate Richmond, Virginia from Kampala, Uganda.

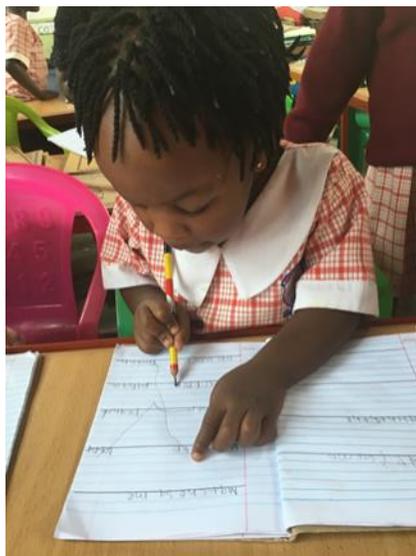
COPI is actively recruiting more schools in the United States to participate in a pen pal letter exchange with Circle of Peace School. For more information, contact Kate McCullough, Pen Pal Program Manager, at (804) 332-7376 or KateMcCullough47@yahoo.com.



Monica Gilsanz with young friend at Circle of Peace School.



Student and teacher aboard the school van.



Learning to read and write.

My Circle of Peace School Story and the Importance of Starting Conversations

By Monica Gilsanz, Circle of Peace School Volunteer, Summer 2016

Education as a human right rather than a privilege is a concept that was instilled in me from my immigrant parents who came to the U.S. to pursue their dreams of becoming physicians. While a quality education should be accessible to every child despite location, gender, age, or socioeconomic status, the realities show stark inequalities. Ensuring that every student receives the education they deserve is a daunting challenge. However, this does not discourage the teachers and administrators at Circle of Peace School (COPS) in Makindye, Uganda. After spending two months as COPS's organizational and instructional intern, it is evident that, despite having few resources, COPS provides a community where students are nurtured and can grow as learners.

I was privileged to work, live, and learn from the COPS family and have committed myself to ensuring that others know about this spectacular group of educators.

The beauty of COPS is their commitment to students and families through providing affordable education regardless of a student's socioeconomic status. Reducing or completely waiving tuition allow many students to attend. Witnessing registration at the beginning of term, I was able to see how many students are now able to access quality education. Unfortunately, waiving tuition puts a strain on the operations at COPS as they lack a stable flow of income.

The shortage of funds does not stop Principal MaryLove and Director Charles from providing students with an engaging and holistic school experience. They recognize that the classroom is not the only place where learning can take place. During my two months at COPS, students in both primary and nursery classes participated in numerous poem competitions throughout Kampala, a wildlife and tourism exhibition, and two field trips. Because students are continuously exposed to different aspects of the community, they will graduate with both academic and life skills, making them ready to take on the world.

Watching MaryLove and Charles transform students and make them good community members made me reflect on the roles and the responsibilities that individuals can take on to better education globally. I encourage all COPS supporters to be a part of the effort. Your contribution to change does not have to be costly. Let's bring awareness to increasing access to quality education worldwide through conversations. Talk to your neighbors, colleagues, and family members about COPS and discuss what you can do for COPS.

I was privileged to work, live, and learn from the COPS family and have committed myself to ensuring that others know about this spectacular group of educators. Hopefully, after we have such conversations, perspectives will be broadened, action will occur, and the gaps in quality education will become smaller.

You, too, can visit Circle of Peace School

COPI is actively recruiting teachers or retired teachers to spend a term at Circle of Peace School. Terms run from February to May, June to August and September to November. For more information, contact Erika Guedes, Overseas Service Learning Program Manager (804) 874-8939 or erikatsguedes@hotmail.com, or see our website: circleofpeaceintl.org.

An Amazing Trip, An Amazing Blessing

By Betty Allen, Board Char, Circle of Peace International

I was fortunate to return to Makindye Uganda this year to visit Circle of Peace School for the second time. Excited to be going, hating the 24 hours of travel but knew that once there I would be welcomed with open arms from the Bbaale Family and all the students. Our journey was uneventful which Joanita and I were thankful for.

We took over 500 pounds of luggage. They were chocked full of school supplies that had been donated by our wonderful COPI supporters, two laptops and a desktop scanner, clothes and shoes that Joanita collected, toiletry items, medicine, donated costume jewelry, treats such as candy, cookies and crackers and many more things that are too numerous to list.

Unpacking and sorting took us almost a day. Items for the school, gifts for each teacher and family member was sorted and packed into little gift bags. These little items were received with great joy and appreciation.

Our days were packed with to do lists. With monetary donations, we purchased material for 40 school uniforms along with 100 athletic uniforms and socks. Drainage grates were installed so that children and adults wouldn't fall into the drains. Gutters were added to the main house so that rain water can be captured for use. We purchased a year's worth of copier paper and toner, a DVD player and speakers, septic tank cleaning and repair materials. And we treated students, teachers and staff to an ice cream party. A huge THANK YOU to everyone who made this possible!!

I want to take this time to talk about the school and the Bbaale Family. What this family does day in and day out amazes me. Joanita had a vision for a school that children could attend regardless of their ability to pay for their education. She started with 8 children on the front porch. Today her family continues to provide an education for over 400 students. There is a mix of families that can pay full tuition, partial tuition or no tuition at all. The school budget is always stretched to the limit. There are a couple of other sources of income, the chicken farm, family crop farm, rent from a small parcel of land and support from other family members.

MaryLove, Charles, Ibrahim, Sulaiman, Farook, Mom Amina, Medina and many other helpful hands make sure that the school is ready each day. They start early (sometimes 4 am) in the kitchen, making breakfast for the family and students that may not have had breakfast at home. By 6 am Charles, along with other drivers, head out to pick up students using two vans and a car. They make 3 trips each morning and again in the afternoon. A large number of students are dropped off by a family member or they walk to school.

Teachers start arriving and ready their rooms. The children play on the playground or go to their classrooms until the school bell rings. There is laughter and smiles from these 440 students. They are truly happy that they are at school and they come ready to learn. Classrooms are crowded with little elbow room but these students don't seem to notice. They are there to learn. They have the supplies their family can provide and Circle of Peace provides the rest.

The teachers and their helpers are attentive to the children. They want their students to excel and they do all in their power to make that happen. The children are taught English as a second language. Their penmanship is better than most students here in the United States. You can walk into any classroom and see them working hard. There is NO disruptive behavior in any classroom. These children are respectful because they know what a gift they are getting.

They have dreams, big dreams, of becoming doctors, lawyers, pilots, teachers, farmers and laborer's. They know that with an education they will be able to help their families. The children head home around 4 pm homework in hand. Some have support at home that can help with their homework others are not as lucky. Some can't practice their English because their parents only speak their native language. Others may have to wait until the next day to have their next meal. When the children arrive the next morning, smiles are in place and they are ready to learn.

The Bbaale Family along with dedicated teachers and helpers are creating an environment that makes Circle of Peace School a success. All of the Bbaale family members make the education of children a priority with little to no financial remuneration from the school. They spend long hours every day doing what they do because they believed in Joanita and her passion to provide education to all children of Uganda. I am proud to know such a loving and caring family and that I have had an opportunity to be a small part of this amazing journey.



Betty Allen helps a COPS student try on a new pair of shoes.



Betty helping to tear down old building.



New building under construction.



Phone 804-247-1177

Circle of Peace School website
www.circleofpeaceschool.org

Circle of Peace International website
www.circleofpeaceintl.org

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THE BEST WAY TO FIND YOURSELF IS TO LOSE YOURSELF IN THE SERVICE OF OTHERS.

— GANDHI

Circle of Peace International (COPI) is a U.S.-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to ensuring the success of a small, family-run school in Uganda that is a sanctuary for children who would otherwise be denied an education.

COPI supports the school financially, establishes links with schools in the U.S., provides opportunities for Americans to volunteer at the school., and helps the school set up profitmaking businesses in order to become self-sufficient. COPI is run completely by volunteers.

Circle of Peace International
2404 Prestwick Rd.
Henrico, VA 23294

Address correction requested

A day to give that makes an impact

By Jessie Munn, Development Director

As a kick-off to its giving season, Circle of Peace International is now part of GivingTuesday! COPI has joined over 45,000 organizations around the world to enhance the philanthropic sector as a whole. Tuesday, November 29, 2016, is the fourth annual celebration of GivingTuesday.

GivingTuesday is a movement to celebrate all the good that nonprofits do with a global day of giving. It is an international event that brings nonprofits, donors, businesses, and communities together to celebrate generosity and the impact of giving.

For one day, the Tuesday after Black Friday, so many will be reminded that giving back and aiding important causes is just as (if not more) important than super savings deals. Last year, more than 700 thousand visitors logged on to the GivingTuesday site and gave over 116 million in 24 hours.

So many will come together for GivingTuesday and **we need YOU to be our champion and help spread the excitement. Tell your friends and family why you think they should help COPI and help us to meet our giving initiatives.** We will be raising funds to furnish the new classrooms, library, boys dormitory and staff room at Circle of Peace School.

On November 29th, millions are going to show their support for their favorite nonprofit during GivingTuesday. On that day, every donation to COPI will go to help us claim our share of the millions raised. GivingTuesday is 24 hours of unprecedented nonprofit giving-and it is your chance to make a real difference.

This is going to be a big event that everyone will be talking about.

Help us spread the word and tell everyone you know that now is the time to help deserving children in Uganda get an education.



#GIVINGTUESDAY™
NOVEMBER 29