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COPI Board of Directors

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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 profit-making businesses in order to become self-sufficient. COPI is run completely by volunteers.

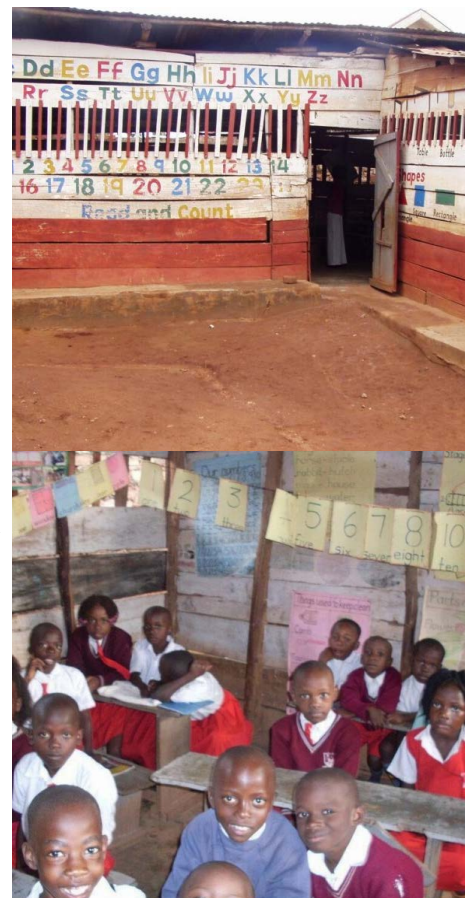
COPI Fundraiser/cont'd. from page 1
the purchase of the land adjacent to the school, will cost \$300,000.

The COPI Board of Directors has endorsed a strategy for raising the needed funds. This strategy involves giving dinner presentations to small groups of people, in their homes, where the mission and successes of Circle of Peace School will be explained...as well as the critical need for funding assistance.

Our goal is to host 100 dinners over the next two years. If you are interested in hosting a dinner to which you can invite others to learn about the needs of Circle of Peace School and its students, please contact me at joanitasenoga@gmail.com. And please remember, these dinners need not be elaborate!

With your help, we can achieve this important goal. Please spread the word to family, friends and coworkers who may be interested in hosting a dinner. Looking back on the progress we have made, I can't thank enough every individual who has been generous to Circle of Peace School and its students.

And now, regarding the new building initiative — we can't do it alone. Please continue to stand with us — with your help I know we can build Circle of Peace School and give the children who rely on it for their education a better future. ☺



Classrooms with solid walls will make learning much easier, keeping the chill out on cold days. And when it rains, a wood or concrete floor won't get muddy the way bare earth does.

Circle Of Peace International

NEWSLETTER



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

COPI Launches \$300,000 Fundraising Campaign

By Joanita Senoga



Dear Friends of Circle of Peace International and the Circle of Peace School,

I extend my greetings and sincerest thanks for supporting the mission of our two organizations over the years. I also bring you best wishes from the staff,

faculty, and students of Circle of Peace School in Uganda.

I'm pleased to report that the state of our two sister organizations, Circle of Peace International (COPI) and the Circle of Peace School (CoPS), remains strong, promising, and hopeful.

As I look back on the past year, I am humbled by how much we have accomplished. We are so grateful for our sponsors and donors who have made, and continue to make, tremendous impact on CoPS. Your generous gifts make it possible for our students to stay in school.

Your gifts have also provided CoPS with a much-needed facelift. However, the school desperately needs new classroom buildings, and we've moved forward with architectural plans for the new facilities. Please see architectural renderings online at www.circleofpeaceintl.org. Construction, including



Architectural rendering of the future, new school. The new building will provide enough classrooms for CoPS' growing student body.

continued on page 8

COPI to Observe Fifth Anniversary with Gala at the Roslyn on October 18, 2015

On Sunday, October 18, COPI will observe its fifth anniversary. "This will be an occasion to celebrate our accomplishments and honor the many persons who have made our success possible," says Betty Allen, Chair of the Anniversary Celebration. The festivities will kick off at 3 p.m. at the Roslyn Conference and Retreat Center, 8727 River Road, Richmond, VA.

The free event is an opportunity for people to review what has been accomplished in the past five years at Circle of Peace School through the efforts of COPI, to thank those who have contributed to these projects, to get an update on what is currently happening at the school, and learn about future initiatives.

Special invitations are being sent to those who have traveled to Circle of Peace School to volunteer their time and talents, to those who have held leadership positions, and to donors. "But we want to thank everyone who has helped in any way," says Joanita Senoga, Founder and President of COPI. "Come meet the people who have been part of this amazing effort."

Please mark your calendars to join us on October 18. Formal invitations will be sent in early September. ☺



Summer 2015, Volume 5, Issue 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- CoPS Students Make New Friends . . . 2
- New Girls' Dormitory . . . 2
- Desks and Chairs and Furnishings . . . 3
- Kids Helping Kids . . . 3
- Amina's New Kitchen . . . 4
- New Volunteers Move COPI Forward . . . 5
- CoPS Beefs Up Security Measures . . . 6
- Director Donates House for Classroom . . . 7
- News & Updates . . . 7

The Circle of Peace School Makes New Friends!

by Elizabeth Jordan

Students at Circle of Peace School (CoPS) recently had a wonderful opportunity to interact with their American counterparts at the Patrick Henry School for Science and Arts (PHSSA) located in Richmond, VA.

PHSSA's Assistant Principle Shana Williams had a vision of establishing a partnership with an elementary school in Africa. On Friday, June 5, 2015 her hope was realized thanks to the efforts of CoPS bursar Farook Bbaale who arranged a virtual meeting between the two schools via Skype.

Forty PHSSA students from the third and fifth grades, and an equal number of CoPS students from Primary 4 and 5 participated, as well as teachers and CoPS headmistress MaryLove Bbaale. The students were giddy with excitement as they waited for Skype to connect, and cheered once they were able to see their new friends on the big screen for the very first time!



PHSSA students interact with their new friends from CoPS during a Skype session.

The PHSSA students had many questions for their new friends in Uganda, including what types of foods they like to eat and what they do in their spare time. The CoPS students were ready with questions, too, mostly about academics. They were especially interested in knowing what subjects the PHSSA students studied, and how they were disciplined. Even the teachers had questions, but mainly for each other. They were eager to learn more about what their counterparts across the ocean were teaching.

The 30-minute session, facilitated by Farook, was a huge success — so much so that it was decided the two schools would Skype again!

The second session, held on June 12, included PHSSA kindergarteners and Ms. Short's fourth graders, and CoPS students from the Baby, Middle, and Top classes. The highlight of the session was the song and dance performance of *Funny Monkey Character* by CoPS; in response, the PHSSA sang their elementary school anthem! The CoPS students remarked:

We are the happiest school around Uganda today! We had a very educational and exciting moment! Students over there were so good and we loved them. Thanks to Ms. Williams, too. Above all, we are looking forward to doing this again!

From the Skype sessions, it was clear to PHSSA Assistant Principal Williams that the Ugandan students place a high value on education, considering it a privilege. Williams addressed the PHSSA students, urging them to take the great gift of education seriously.

Ms. Williams will fundraise for the **Skype with Uganda Fund** to pay for more sessions. While there is no direct cost for internet use for PHSSA, Skype is not free for CoPS and costs the African school dearly. COPI thanks Ms. Williams for all her efforts in strengthening PHSSA's partnership with the Circle of Peace School! ☺

*If you're interested in learning more about this program or contributing financially to the **Skype with Uganda Fund**, please contact Elizabeth Jordan at mauritiusliz@yahoo.com. Thank you.*

Thanks to Generous Donors, Girls Have a New Dormitory at CoPS

By Joanita Senoga

The girls who board at Circle of Peace School used to cram into a 10' x10' room that had just a single, small window. The room could fit only two sets of three bunk beds, for a total of six beds — and each bed was shared by two girls.

Last November 2014, Morris Muyinza, former director of Circle of Peace School, agreed to sell his house to the school. COPI saw this as an opportunity to provide more suitable living accommodations for the female student borders.

Sassy Creasey, a dear friend of COPI, witnessed firsthand what school life was like for the girls when she visited the school in June 2014 — the girls desperately needed more space. Willing to do anything to help, Creasey volunteered to paint the girl's dorm and decorate it with colorful pictures.

Back in the U.S., Creasey organized a silent auction to raise funds to purchase Muyinza's house. Board member Liz Jordan also helped by creating an online crowdfunding campaign. Funds raised by these two initiatives enabled the school to purchase the house, and renovate and furnish it as a dormitory.

The house was purchased in April 2014, and renovations, including a private bathroom for the girls, began. Bbaale family member Madina Hope Bbaale now serves as the housemother. She loves the girls dearly and takes great care of them. She teaches them personal hygiene, responsibility and family values.

The girls send a big thank you to everyone who contributed so that their living accommodations while at the school could improve. They send the following message: "Thank you, our very best friends. We love you all so much." ☺

Director Donates His House to Accommodate Increased Enrollment

By Joanita Senoga

Prior to the current school year, CoPS had an enrollment of 189 students. Now, it has grown to 300. The school was forced to put students on a waiting list due to limited space. New facilities are desperately needed.

In April, Charles Bbaale, Director of Circle of Peace School, decided to donate his house to the school to be used as a classroom.

"If the school is growing, I am not going to stand in the way or stop the school's development" said Charles. "If Mama Amina can give her land to the school, I am willing to give up this house. It's the least I can do and I am truly honored to serve our students. I believe someday I will get a better house."

Charles and his brothers began tearing down walls to expand the house into one large classroom. The small windows were removed, and in their place two large windows were installed to allow for better lighting and air circulation. Also, a rail was installed around the balcony to make it safe. The building is now being used as a classroom for kindergarten and pre-school students. ☺



CoPS Director Charles Bbaale donated his house to the school to be used as a classroom.

News and Updates

MaryLove Bbaale, Principal, Circle of Peace School

SMART TANK – Charles Bbaale, Director of Circle of Peace School, recently installed a "smart tank." This is a tank that filters drinking water. Once the tank is fully installed, it will no longer be necessary to boil water for drinking. The students are very excited about getting the smart tank.

Charles said, "We need at least three smart tanks to serve our students better, but we could only afford to pay for one. Our students will just line up and wait. It's about 25 minutes to filter the water."

FIELD TRIP – For the second year in a row, the Ugandan Ministry of Education required that students participate in vocational tours.

On June 19, 2015, six schools in the Makindye division visited three places. First stop was the Entebbe International Airport. For many of the students, this was their first visit to an airport,



Smart Tanks like this one filters water for drinking. Water no longer needs to be boiled.

and their first opportunity to see an airplane close up. Students toured the airport in the civil aviation bus, and later ate breakfast inside the airport. The upper class students went to the metrological center to study the weather instruments. The whole school then headed to Nakiwogo landing, and, lastly, to the Entebbe Zoo.

Everyone who met the tour group was impressed by the school's well-behaved students who asked plenty of great questions.

For the students, the tours engender visions of the future that keep them dreaming. Student Evan Bukenya said, "This is the best day in my life. The food was very delicious. I want to go back again." Judith Kwagala said, "I am going to study very hard so that I can become an airhostess." And Olivia Mbejjo said she would someday like to become a cashier at the airport.

For the teachers and staff, the youthful dreams are better than money. Making the world a friendlier place for children is the reward that encourages them.

MaryLove Bbaale stated, "It gives us so much hope to see them begin to see their futures in a better way." ☺

CoPS Beefs Up Security Measures to Protect Students and Staff

By MJ Ebenhack

The Ugandan Ministry of Education has taken steps recently to insure the safety of all students at both public and private schools throughout the country. Security measures were instituted earlier this year after the April 2 attack on Garissa University in Kenya that left over 147 college students dead. The Somali militant group Al-Shabab that mounted the attack has issued threats against schools in Uganda.

The Ministry of Education issued security guidelines that require school administrators to activate school security committees. This includes making sure that schools are securely fenced/walled, limiting access to school grounds, and having trained guards on duty.

Circle of Peace School has for many years been surrounded by an 8-foot wall, and a gate that is opened only for students and parents to come and go. In compliance with the new directives, the School has hired a trained and uniformed security guard. The guard is outfitted with a metal detector and a *batuni* (security stick).

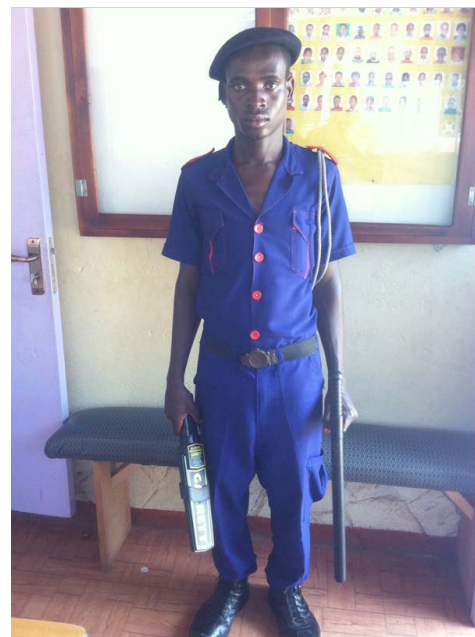
Because of this unexpected expense, the school turned to Circle of Peace International to assist with outfitting and training the guard. For \$265, a uniform, shoes, a metal detector, and security stick were supplied to Ronald Wasswa, the new security guard. He also completed a training course.

"We are emphasizing community policing of the students and neighbors and also emphasizing vigilance of everybody," said John Nkundizana, the Ugandan official in charge of security. Police are encouraging all Ugandans to be vigilant, practice neighborhood watch, cooperate with the area police commanders and report suspicious activity.

Heightened attention to attack has not only focused on schools, but also churches, mosques, entertainment sites, shopping malls, commercial buildings, and other public places that attract large crowds.

The Government of Uganda has assured the public that the country remains safe, with a very extensive and well trained professional security force employed countrywide, with effective patrols and 24/7 monitoring activities. "With such improved vigilance among the public we shall achieve ultimate victory over those who would want to harm us. We shall prevail," stated Police Captain Fred Enanga last May. 🌸

"With such improved vigilance among the public we shall achieve ultimate victory over those who would want to harm us..."



Ronald Wasswa, a trained guard, will help bring a measure of security to Circle of Peace School.

Are you traveling to Uganda, or know someone who is?

COPI has a storehouse of clothing, school supplies, and personal hygiene items that we'd like to get to Circle of Peace School. COPI will pay the airline baggage cost of transporting a suitcase to Uganda. Please call Joanita at 804-247-1177 if you (or someone you know) are heading to Uganda and would be willing to take a suitcase full of supplies with you.



Want to save money on dining in the Richmond, VA area?

COPI is selling RVA cards for \$10 each (regularly \$35) that allows diners to receive half off a second meal at many restaurants in the Richmond area. All proceeds benefit Circle of Peace School. Please call Joanita at 804-247-1177, or any COPI board member to purchase one for yourself and more for your friends!

Desks and Chairs and Furnishings...Oh My!

By Betty Allen

School officials at St. Andrew's School, Richmond, VA were excited over the major renovation scheduled over the 2015 summer break that included new furniture and fixtures for the classrooms. But they wondered what to do with the current desks and chairs that were still very usable. They deliberated among themselves...and struck a brilliant idea: Why not offer the furniture and furnishings to Circle of Peace School?

Circle of Peace International's President, Joanita Senoga, was elated when Susan Smolinski, Business Manager at St. Andrew's School, contacted her with the good news. What a wonderful gift! Finally, students at Circle of Peace School can each have their own desk and chair! It would be a great change from crowding on benches around one small table.

But then came the question: How to get the desks and chairs to Uganda?

COPI has had wonderful help with this endeavor, so far, from RCS/Entrust, the commercial moving and warehousing company that undertook the task of emptying the school of furniture and fixtures in preparation for the renovation. Fortunately, I have had a long relationship with RCS/Entrust before I retired, and was happy to learn that project coordinator Rick Murren was working on the St. Andrew's project. I shared with Rick COPI's dilemma about the newly acquired furniture — and this conversation resulted in RCS/Entrust agreeing to move the desks and chairs into one of their trailers until such time as COPI determines how and when it can get the furnishings to Uganda.

So, in May, in just a little over an hour, 100 desks and over 140 chairs were loaded on a truck and moved to storage.

Thank you, Rick and RCS/Entrust!

A huge **Thank You**, too, to St. Andrew's School. Many thanks, as well, to Head of School Cyndy Weldon-Lassiter, and to teacher Kathy Tappen and her 2nd grade class who collected three boxes of supplies including textbooks in science, math, social studies and reading that will be sent to Circle of Peace School.

We are now researching the best way to get the furniture to Uganda. If you, or someone you know, can help facilitate this task, please contact COPI either through email or phone. We would greatly appreciate the help! 🌸



Kids Helping Kids

Nancy Walters, 2nd Grade Teacher, Fillmore Central School, Buffalo, NY

Looking for a way to help my first and second graders understand that they are part of a larger world and that children in other countries are very much like them, I realized that what I actually wanted was a Global Service Learning Project.

I contacted Givology, an online giving marketplace which, in turn, put me in contact with Circle of Peace School (CoPS). Thus began a relationship with Joanita Senoga and the school in Uganda that has blossomed over the last five years. My students at Fillmore Central School in Buffalo, NY, and I, have learned so much about CoPS and the culture and needs of its students.

We launched a campaign to help CoPS by selling crafts we made, selling pies that students' parents made, bringing in lots — and lots! — of "found" pennies and selling t-shirts. During that time, COPI President Joanita Senoga visited and gave the students an inspiring talk about Circle of Peace School in faraway Uganda.

Through the efforts of students, parents and teachers, we were able to help CoPS purchase a new color copier/printer, several sewing machines and fire extinguishers. We've sponsored several students, and also sent pen pal letters and care packages. The painting shown here, done by a Fillmore Art Teacher as a gift to CoPS, bears words that express our desire: *Kids helping kids — from across the ocean.* 🌸



A New Kitchen for Amina

By Joanita Senoga



Joanita Senoga and her mother, Amina.

We're thrilled with Amina's new kitchen! Prior to the remodeling, it was a large open space with no table, sink, or storage cabinets...but now, thanks to the generosity of precious friends like you, Amina's kitchen is a showplace!

From the state-of-the-art appliances, including a brand new stove and sink, to the modern countertops and cabinets, elegant floors and ceiling, the kitchen is a transformation that one might encounter in fashionable homes throughout America!

The new kitchen is a testimony to the faith of my mother, Amina Bbaale, who worked and gave no matter how little she had. For 35 years, she cooked on a small charcoal stove on the floor, seated on a stool, to prepare the delicious snacks she sold at the market.

Both my parents worked hard, and encouraged their 12 children to assist with the business. Over the years, Amina saved her money — enough to buy the land that the Circle of Peace School (CoPS) sits on, and which many students call home!

Amina relishes the fellowship and love as she works with the other cooks, especially her assistants Madina and Moses, to feed the children and staff who gather daily to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

School days are busy days. In the morning, boarding students line up for breakfast before classes begin, then around 10 a.m., kindergarten students run into the kitchen asking for water and a snack. The noon meal is served in the kitchen, and the students take their plate of food to the dining shed to eat.

For all these years, Amina made do with the kitchen she had, treasuring the moments she could share with others and the good she could do for everyone. She never thought it could be any



Thanks to generous friends like you, Amina now works out of a modern kitchen.

Amina's kitchen before the renovation.

different, and didn't expect it ever would be. Things, however, were about to take a turn for the better!

In June 2014, three COPI board members took a working vacation to CoPS. Upon arrival, they found Amina in her kitchen, where she had been all day, preparing a special meal for them. The food was delicious, but by the time they finished eating it was late, and when they took their plates to the kitchen, they found Amina and her assistants cleaning up in near total darkness.

There was one small light bulb in the enormous kitchen, and it provided very little light with which to see.

Liz Jordan, who earned her Ph.D. from Rutgers University for her doctoral research on African women's labor, was particularly struck by this. She wondered what could be done to improve the situation. After a night of prayerful contemplation, she asked Amina's son Charles to provide her with an estimate for installing adequate lighting in the kitchen.

By the grace God, Charles not only found a technician to do the work, but he provided an estimate that very evening! There was much praising of God in that bright kitchen thereafter!

Over the course of that week, Liz spent more time in the kitchen with Amina, observing the conditions and talking about ways they could be improved. It was clear that Amina preferred to stand upright at a counter and work with a "modern" stove. A sink with running water, too, would eliminate a lot of extra work, for she would no longer have to haul water

from the cistern, and dishwashing, in particular, could be done in far less time and with far less effort.

By the end of the week, Charles had provided the COPI Board Members with an estimate for the cost of renovating Amina's kitchen to provide her with all of the amenities she would need to do her work more efficiently and comfortably.

Fundraising began. One anonymous

"...after all these years, Jesus has finally given us a modern kitchen, a place where we can cook, eat, socialize, pray and have fellowship."

donor who loves to cook says, "Everything that Circle of Peace does is important, but feeding the children seems essential. I couldn't imagine Amina toiling selflessly in those primitive conditions. Donating seed money for the new kitchen was a simple, small gesture that might make a dramatic difference in Amina's life, her ministry and the lives of the students she loves."

The renovation of the kitchen was started earlier this year. Amina's face lights up as she recalls, "When the workers began the job, I didn't know what to expect. I knew they were getting us cabinets and countertops. Abraham, who was communicating closely with contractors, came and said, 'Mama Amina, here is the design of your new kitchen. You need to pick the type of wood you want for your cabinets.'"

Amina recalls it with great joy. "I simply laughed, praising Jesus, saying, 'Alleluia! Amen! God you're wonderful and great! Alleluia! Amen!' I said to myself, after all these years, Jesus has finally given us a modern kitchen, a place where we can cook, eat, socialize, pray and have fellowship. I will continue to sing and praise Him for He is worthy to be praised. Alleluia! Amen!" 🌸

New Volunteers Move COPI Forward!

COPI is pleased to welcome a number of highly skilled and dedicated people who recently have stepped forward to volunteer their time and expertise.

Celeste Pounds has assumed the position of Newsletter Editor. She is in charge of all aspects of producing the quarterly newsletter. Celeste brings a number of years' experience in the nonprofit sector, having worked for another international child-centered organization. She has experience in fundraising, marketing project management, copywriting, editing, graphic design, e-Commerce and special events production. Celeste holds a Marketing degree from Rutgers University and a graduate degree in Nonprofit Management from Rosemont College, Philadelphia.



August Kunnecke is serving as COPI's Database Manager. He has set up COPI's first database program, which is allowing COPI to better communicate with people and track donations. Augie has many years of experience as a Business Systems Analyst, Project Manager, and Technology Analyst for major corporations in the Richmond area. "Augie has been amazing in setting up our database so that multiple people can access it remotely. He's also willing to help with general IT needs," says COPI President Joanita Senoga.



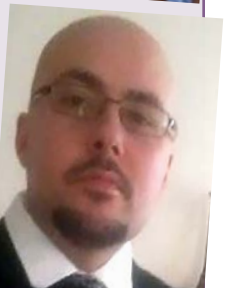
Ellie Sullivan is working this summer as COPI's Communications intern. She is assisting COPI with writing its first communications plan and steps to begin implementing it. Ellie will be a junior at the University of Richmond this fall, where she is majoring in Business Administration. "It is heartbreaking to hear of children who do not get the opportunity to even go to school, and that is why I want to work with COPI," she says.



Kyndall Williams has taken on the important task of grant writing. She is a young professional with a degree in International Studies from Old Dominion University and an interest in key global subjects such as education and cultural exchange. Kyndall has studied and traveled extensively. "I have always wanted to work for a cause that I am passionate about," says Kyndall.



We are delighted that **Vernon Austin** has taken on the position of Director of Marketing. He is a professional designer who is applying his creative talents to several projects immediately. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Professional and Technical Communication from Ferris State University, and an Associate Degree in Graphic Design Technology from Southwestern Michigan College. He has spent time in Africa with his wife, who is originally from Zambia.



There are other positions that COPI is hoping to fill: Program Director (multiple positions), Director of Development, and Webmaster. Please contact MJ Ebenhack, Leadership Development Director, at Ebenhack@gmail.com if you or someone you know may be interested.