



Circle of Peace International is a voluntary, non-profit organization established to promote access to formal and informal education, greater social understanding, and cultural exchanges through outreach and relationship building between Americans and Ugandans

MESSAGE FROM COPI PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of Circle of Peace International (COPI) and Circle of Peace School,

I can not thank you enough for all you have done to support our mission over the past year. Without your support, the Circle of Peace School would not be able to continue growing and positively impacting the lives of children. I have been continuously impressed by your commitment and generosity to our organization. We truly appreciate all of the ways you have supported us this year. Because of you, the children at Circle of Peace School are receiving the quality education they deserve and an education that will truly change their lives.

In this newsletter, you will read about the latest projects at the Circle of Peace School as well as stories from several visitors to the school about their experiences, including COPI Board Members Betty Allen, Liz Jordan, and myself. You will also be able to read about current needs at the Circle of Peace School and COPI's current projects.

Mark your calendars for our upcoming Spring Fundraiser on March 28, 2015 at Taza on 5047 Forest Hill in Richmond, VA. We will have silent auction items, such as African craft, a raffle, food and music. At the gathering, we are looking forward to sharing with you more information about our projects and how you can support it.

I hope that you enjoy reading about our accomplishments over this past year. Thank you so much for your time, support, and investments in COPI. We are so grateful for our sponsors and donors who have made and continue to make tremendous impact on the CoPS.

Kindest regards,
Joanita B. Senoga

Volume 5, Issue 1

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COPI BOARD MEMBERS VISIT CIRCLE OF PEACE SCHOOL, SUMMER 2014



"I refuse to label the children orphans anymore because the Bbaale family gives these children unconditional love, a place to live and an education, which is what any family does!!"

UPDATES FROM THE CIRCLE OF PEACE SCHOOL

*by MaryLove Bbaale,
Principal of the Circle of Peace School*

As we begin a new term, we'd like to take a minute to look back, reflect and recognize the tremendous progress that has been seen by our students, teachers and

school administration. We are also thrilled with the continued development of the Circle of Peace School.

Our Facilities have had several major developments. We have added new glass windows in the

Nursery section, a new temporary classroom in the primary section, and a cement platform that runs along the entire school building and expanded the main office.

My brother, Charles Bbaale, used his talents *(continued)*

to redesign the main office space now has a waiting area for our parents and will temporarily serve as the school library. In the past, parents visited the main office as they pleased. Now that we have a waiting room, we are implementing office hours during which parents are welcome to visit. We also will be adding book cases to the space and transferring some of our library books to the main office. We're so excited about our next projects which are to build a boy's and girl's dormitory, new classrooms, and a library.

In February 2014, Iria Jones and Joanita Senoga from COPI visited the Peace School and were able to replace batteries for and repair our solar panels thanks to a generous donation from MJ and Ben Ebenhack. With the repaired solar panels and new batteries, our solar panels are back up and working at full capacity.

Our school has also made great progress academically and continues to offer new opportunities to our students.

Our students continue to

improve academically and are making high marks in their exams.

Our head teacher states, "Our end of term exams results in best performance as always make sure to cater to all of our student's individual needs." With the help of Pamela Vanias, our volunteer teacher from Virginia, students have started Readers' Theater lessons. Readers' Theater is a character building and public speaking activity that focuses on fluency, voice fluctuation and annunciation, as well as creative thinking skills. These lessons have been incorporated into their regular English Reading classes with enthusiasm from our students. The children have enjoyed acting out the plays for their classmates, and they are excited to continue with more Readers' Theater activities in the future.

In addition to introducing Readers' Theater, Ms. Vanias has also helped our teachers to create a teacher development program

which will help our teachers continue their professional development. The program will focus on helping our teachers to improve time management, classroom organization, and their vocabulary and grammar teaching skills.

Kathleen Creasey, a friend of Circle of Peace School from Richmond, Virginia, has also sponsored an educational tour that enables our students to study the variety of careers available to them and learn about making career choices .

The students learned a great deal and were exposed to a broad number of different careers.

Finally, during their visit in June 2014, Circle of Peace International board members were able to accomplish multiple projects at Circle of Peace thanks to all of our supporters, including:

- Building a new bathroom for the kindergarten class;
- Tiling the dining shed where the children eat their

snacks and lunch;

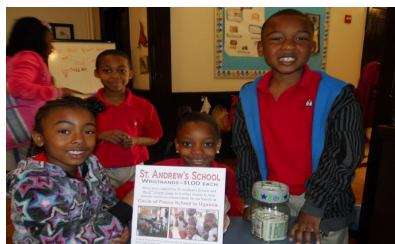
- Putting gutters around the main house directing water into our 10,000 gallon tank;
- Purchasing 50 soccer balls for the school; and
- Painting the boy's and girl's dormitory.

In closing, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to all our donors, supporters, and Circle of Peace Friends. Without you, many of the advancements at Circle of Peace would not have been possible. I look forward to updating you in the next newsletter, and thank you for your continued support.



Mary Love Bbaale, Headmistress at Circle of Peace School, in the newly-renovated office

SHARING HEARTS AND MINDS: ST. ANDREW'S AND CIRCLE OF PEACE STUDENTS CONNECT



2nd grade students at St. Andrew's (above) raised funds to support Circle of Peace School. Thanks to the \$250 they raised, CoPS students are enjoying their lunches under a newly renovated dining shed (pictured below)



By Kathy Tappen,
2nd Grade Teacher, St Andrew's
School in Richmond, VA

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 wristbands and raised nearly \$250 for their friends at Circle of Peace School.

Uganda became the focal point of the cultural study in second grade after the Head of St. Andrew's School, Dr.

Cynthia Weldon-Lassiter, and the school's Chaplain, the Reverend Abbott Bailey, travelled to Uganda to visit Circle of Peace School in the summer of 2012. The second graders not only learn about a different culture, 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 two years, St. Andrew's School and Circle of

Peace School have become undeniably linked as the like-minded missions of our schools and the hearts of our students are connected. As a teacher, I find it to be both a blessing and a tribute to the founders of both schools 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.

CHICKEN FARM PROSPERS UNDER ABRAHAM

by Joanita Senoga,
COPI President & Circle of Peace
School Founder

The David Davenport Chicken Farm was established in the summer of 2011 thanks to a grant from the Davis Projects for Peace Foundation and the Bbaale family, and the project seeks to provide long-term, sustainable funding for Circle of Peace School. The farm started with 500 chickens, and today there are around 1,800 chickens!

The farm is managed by Abraham Bbaale on behalf of the school. Thanks to his efforts over the past couple of years, the farm is largely self-supporting and is generating enough revenue to cover operating costs, namely chicken feed and day-to-day maintenance. The farm also provides two eggs a week to each student at the school. Remaining eggs are sold in local markets, and the profit is used for various projects at the school. From the egg sales, Abraham has earned enough money to install a paved driveway at the school, expand the school's main office, renovate windows in the P-4 and P-5 classrooms, install protective, wire fencing around the school, and pave the children's playground.

Abraham is a very hard worker, and because of his unwavering effort and determination, both the chicken farm and the school have prospered. Abraham has big dreams for the future, and one day he wants the farm to be large enough to be able to fully support Circle of Peace

Everyone is extremely optimistic about the future of the chicken farm, but there is still much work to be done before the benefits of the farm, that Abraham and others hope for, become reality.

In June 2014 board members from COPI visited the farm to get a first-hand look at this massive project and see how COPI could contribute to the project. Since the farm is located in a valley of very steep hills, there is inevitable flooding when it rains, which is dangerous for the poultry. Far too frequently, the farm has lost chickens and revenue from those chickens. In order to combat this problem, the essential next step was to develop a proper drainage and sewerage system, and during their visit, COPI board members hired local landscapers to dig and pave drainage ditches at the farm. This project is well underway and will be completed in time for the rainy season in Uganda, which starts in November.

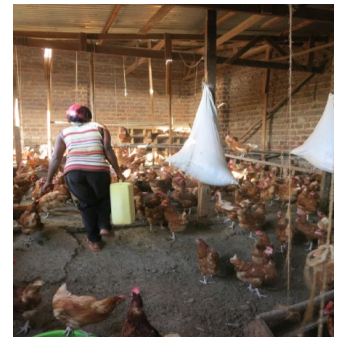
Abraham's next goal is to more than double the size of the farm to 5,000 chickens. He says that at this size the farm will be able to fully support the school's operating expenses. Since 2011, he has worked so hard to grow his starting flock of 500 chickens to 1,800. More chickens are being hatched all the time, and as the farm grows, Abraham will have to build additional coops to house the chickens. For the three existing coops at the farm, Abraham has fashioned every brick himself and overseen the construction. When he is not tending to the chickens, Abraham prepares for the construction of additional coops by mixing, molding, and firing thousands of bricks himself using clay deposits right at the farm.

The Bbaale family, Circle of Peace School, and COPI are all very proud of Abraham and extremely pleased with the success of the David Davenport Chicken Farm. The progress he has made will have a snowball effect for the students, families, and the entire

Circle of Peace School community in the coming years. We are all solidly behind him and want his dreams for the farm and the schools to come to fruition.



Pictured from top to bottom: Chickens at the David Davenport Chicken Farm; Hellen fills the drinking containers for chickens, this takes her about an hour; 250 cartons of eggs: some will go to the school and the rest will be sold; Abraham Bbaale, manager of the farm, gingerly inspects the chickens' health.



HIGHLIGHTS: COPI BOARD MEMBERS VISIT CIRCLE OF PEACE SCHOOL

By Betty Allen COPI Board Member

This year will be remembered as a big 1st for me. I traveled to Uganda in June to visit the Circle of Peace School (COPS) with three outstanding ladies, Joanita, Liz and Katherine (Sassy). Each of us had our own reasons for the visit, and we all came back with love in our hearts for the school and the Bbaale Family. I have been supporting COPS by sitting on the board, helping with fundraisers and just being a part of something bigger than my own little world. I knew I needed to make the journey to the school at some point, but I never made it a priority. When this opportunity presented itself, I knew it was time to see for myself what made this school so special. I have been asking friends, family and anyone that would listen to support COPS, but until I visited the school I couldn't bring in my point of view, only someone else's.

Our visit was incredible. We arrived Saturday, June 21st after almost 24 hours of travel. We were welcomed by the Bbaale family and all 21 smiling orphans that stay with the family. We spent our first afternoon walking the school grounds with Charles and MaryLove Bbaale. We went through each classroom making a list of things that needed to be done, such as windows and tables that needed replacing, teacher

desks and chairs for two classrooms, carpets for the baby classes, gutters to collect rain water, bathrooms for the baby classes (required per the Ministry of Education). The dining shed needed to be renovated where the cement was deteriorating, dorms needed painting, and the kitchen area needed paint and more lighting. Oh, and they needed to build a library to handle the 1,000 books that COPI shipped over by container in April. So we had our to-do list, and we sent Charles off to get estimates for the projects.

We began unpacking our 10 suitcases (over 500lbs of goodies) and started sorting out the items that we brought for the school and the children that stay with the family. I refuse to label the children orphans anymore because the Bbaale family gives these children unconditional love, a place to live and an education, which is what any family does!! We had 50 soccer balls, dental supplies, clothes, flip flops, socks, underwear, games, dolls, pencil sharpeners, chalkboard erasers, books, puzzles, dress up clothes, jump ropes, matchbox cars, bubbles, crayons and coloring books, candy, goody bags for the teachers and lots of gifts for the grownups too!! That night we were formally introduced to each child. The children sang for us and then bid us a good

night.

Sunday morning Liz and Joanita got up and went to church with Momma Amina while Sassy and I slept in. I know we were bad!! That afternoon Charles began to bring in the quotes for our to-do list. The funds to do the things on the list were coming from multiple places: personal and corporate donations and COPI's fundraising efforts. The one thing about the people of Uganda is that everyone wants to work, and Charles always knew someone who could get the job done. Starting that Sunday and going long after we left, our to-do list was almost completed. A \$500 corporate and \$150 personal donation made a four-stall bathroom for the baby class a reality. A \$250 fundraising effort by St. Andrews School allowed the dining shed to be tiled and painted. All the other projects were completed by funds raised by Circle of Peace International through their annual auction and annual giving campaign along with other personal donations.

We now have an ongoing project list and will continue to raise funds so that we can complete them as soon as possible.

We were privileged to wake up on Monday morning to the sounds of children gathering in the play yard. Their laughter and delight in being at school was so refreshing. They all love to see the "aunties" as we were called. On



Monday, Wednesday and Friday they have assembly outside on the play ground. They sing, march and have a grand ole time. It is organized chaos, 180 children and 15 or so adults making a joyful noise--it was amazing. There is so little space, but they don't seem to notice.

The children loved to have their pictures taken, and most important was the instant replay so they could actually see themselves; they never got tired of that!!

Children arrive at school early, 6am in some cases, and some are there till dark. COPS has two vans that go out to pick up students, and they make two trips each morning and afternoon. It is a long day for the children and the Bbaale family.

We spent our days doing lots of different things. Sassy painted wonderful designs on the walls of the boys and girls dorms; Liz had a special project that she is working on...hopefully you will get the details soon; and I worked on building shelves for the library. We all sorted clothes, shoes and books that were sent over in the container and got them organized. Every afternoon we played with the children. Whether it was games, cards, puzzles or coloring books, it was always a highlight of the day. Some days we would venture out to the bank to pick up funds that COPI had wired to us. No stop or yield signs and NO traf-

fic lights. It was a free for all, but we had great drivers so we were safe!!

One afternoon we made a visit to Abraham's home that also houses the David Davenport Chicken Farm. For those of you that are not familiar with the chicken farm, David Davenport was a student at the University of Richmond. He applied for and received a \$10,000 grant to build a chicken farm for COPS. The money raised from selling eggs and the chickens at the end of their laying cycle are used to support the finances for the school. Abraham is hoping that in 2015 the chicken farm will completely support the day to day operations of the school.

We were going to visit Solomon Bbaale and his agriculture farm too, but we ran out of time. Solomon grows many of the vegetables that are used daily in feeding the students and the Bbaale family.

We attended one of the school board meetings and learned about their accomplishments over the past year. We saw their 2013 budget (\$22,475 per year) and found that only 7 teachers and 7 non-teaching staff members are paid a salary.

“The Bbaale family has built on Joanita’s dream to provide a free education for children, and we were so privileged to play such a small part in that dream.”

Headmistress MaryLove, along with Abraham (Director of David Davenport Chicken Farm), Charles (Facilities Manager), Solomon (Director of Agriculture Farm), Farook (IT & clerical support) and last but not least Amina Bbaale, who tirelessly cooks from sun up to sun down, do not receive any salary at this time.

Our visit was short, but we really were able to accomplish so much. The Bbaale family has built on Joanita's dream to provide a free education for children, and we were so privileged to play such a small part in that dream. Thank you to all of our friends and family here in the United States.

Pictured counter-clockwise from top left: (a) Betty Allen, COPI Board Member, poses with students; (b,c) students love getting their pictures taken; (d) Boys living at the school play a round of soccer; (e) Amina Bbaale feeds the young children porridge for breakfast before school; (f) Students smile for the camera; (g) Kathleen Creasey poses with students (h) students gather for assembly; (i-k) COPI unpacks and sorts the suitcases they brought filled with clothing and school supplies for the children as some watch with excitement; (l) Liz Jordan helps spread out pinto beans from Bbaale family farm to dry in the sun; (m) One student falls asleep in Betty's lap; (n, o) Students welcome COPI; (p) Board members and students enjoy the new swing set COPI just installed; (q) Liz Jordan, COPI Board Member, poses with student before leaving.



OBSERVATIONS FROM THE CLASSROOM

by Pamela Varnias COPS Volunteer

This past spring, I was fortunate enough to visit Makindye District of Kampala, Uganda and spend 2 wonderful months with the teachers and students at Circle of Peace School. As a primary school teacher and MA student studying International Training and Education at American University in Washington, DC, I was able to share past experiences while bringing new ideas to Circle of Peace. During my time I was given the chance to observe many lessons, substitute for a few classes, and lead teacher workshops as a way to get to know the staff better

and share various teaching styles, methods, and ideas. As a team, we focused on exciting, innovative, and effective ways to teach English, which special attention to fluency and reading comprehension. We shared classroom activities and even put on a Readers' Theater performance at the end of the workshop.

As a Masters student, with a focus on global education and development, volunteering at Circle of Peace gave me a unique opportunity to see and gain on-site experience of a small, local, family-run school. Living and working at Circle of Peace was

both encouraging and exciting as I observed on a daily bases children coming to school eager to learn and engage in their lessons with caring teachers working collaboratively to assure success. It was heartwarming to see not only the teachers and faculty members as active agents of learning, but also parents, family members, and the surrounding community. During my time at Circle of Peace, I was readily available to lead a helping hand by answering questions, offering teaching ideas, and implementing new projects such as a *physical education* program for the students, which includes



Charles Bbaale and Circle of Peace Staff give Pamela Varnias, their visiting teacher, a parting present.

monthly swimming lessons at community pool. I thoroughly enjoyed my time in Uganda at the Circle of Peace School and I am looking forward to another opportunity in near the future!

BUY RVA CARD, HELP US RAISE \$\$\$ FOR COPI

by Chris Lowrie, Friend of COPI

We will soon be starting a new fundraising campaign that will benefit both Circle of Peace School and all who can make a donation of \$20 or more. If you can make a

donation, we will give you a free RVA card (*pictured right*). The RVA Card offers discounts and deals at over 200 merchants, stores, restaurants and bars in the Richmond area (see www.mycard.com), while raising

money for nonprofits.

Discounts range from coffee with lunch, or a buy one get one free entrée, to discounts on professional service and more.

Our RVA cards are valid for all of 2015 and the more you use

it the more you save! Plus, your donation is tax deductible!



ONGOING PROJECTS AND FUNDING PRIORITIES

Here are just a handful of the projects COPI hopes to accomplish at the Circle of Peace School in the upcoming year. If you would like to contribute towards a particular project, please make checks payable to Circle of Peace International and mail to P.O. 44, University of Richmond, VA 23173. You can also make donations through PayPal by visiting our website at www.circleofpeaceintl.org and clicking "donate."

SPONSOR ALL ORPHANS LIVING, LEARNING AT SCHOOL



Currently, there are 23 orphans residing at the COPS. These children are dependent upon the Bbaale family for their care, clothing, food, shelter, and education, including school fees,

Orphans living at the school pose with Mary Love Bbaale and COPI Board Members during their visit in July.

uniforms, shoes, books, school supplies and school bags.

The annual cost per child is \$395, and in past years, COPI has worked to secure full sponsorships for each child in the Bbaale's care. Today, 9 of the 23 children have full sponsorships.

COPI is seeking full sponsorships for the remaining 14 children in the Bbaale's care, preferably annual sponsorships that will provide for the child throughout their entire academic tenure at the COPS.

PROVIDE CONSISTENT INTERNET ACCESS TO ADMINISTRATION

Although internet service is costly in Uganda, it is an essential service for the COPS. Email in Uganda, just as in the United

States, is a primary means for communication.

As headmistresses, Mary Love Bbaale uses the internet daily to

communicate with the Ministry of Education, download curricular resources for teachers,

and communicate with Circle of Peace Schools partners abroad.

Currently, the school purchases minutes (*continued*)

for internet use depending upon the funds available to them. As a result, access to email and the

internet at the school is sporadic at best.

COPI would like to identify a donor(s) to cover the cost of

providing monthly internet service for the Circle of Peace School. The estimated cost of

this monthly internet service is \$50.

RENOVATE AMINA’S KITCHEN

Amina Bbaale’s kitchen is the heart of the school and in serious need of renovation.

Currently, Mrs. Bbaale cooks for the students over a small coal burning brazier set on the floor while sitting on a low stool. There is no sink, nor any counter space, and there is only one small storage cabinet. The majority of the foodstuffs are stored inside of her house or stacked up on pallets on the kitchen floor. Until recently, the kitchen had only one light.

The orphans in her care take their meals in this kitchen while sitting on mats or cardboard on the

floor, and during school hours school lunches are served out of it.

COPI recognizes this kitchen as fundamental to school operations and is raising money to provide Mrs. Bbaale with the basic amenities she needs to continue her great work.

As of August 2014, the estimate for the much-needed upgrades was \$2,300. However, it has since been brought to our attention that this estimate does not include the cost of a stove which would likely be an additional \$300.



Joanita Senoga poses with her mother, Amina Bbaale, matriarch of the Bbaale family, who is preparing samosas for lunch. In the background is the maize grinder.

ESTABLISH A “FARM TO TABLE” MAIZE OPERATION

The Bbaale family currently owns 10 acres of land in their home village which they use to grow and harvest maize, among other produce. Currently, after harvesting the maize, they take the maize to a mill where it is ground into flour. The school then uses the flour to make *posho* (imagine porridge the consistency of mashed potatoes) for the students’ lunch.

The family owns a maize grinder, but they do not have motors to power the grinder when

they harvest. As a result, they are paying a miller to grind their maize. In addition to this expense, they are losing a valuable byproduct of this process: the maize bran (or chaff), which the miller takes and sells as feed.

COPI would like to establish a “farm to table” operation that would make the school’s maize operation more efficient and support the David Davenport Chicken Farm. The largest

expense at the farm is chicken feed. The feed is composed primarily of maize bran. If the Bbaale family could grind its own maize, they would give the maize bran to the chicken farm. Doing so would reduce the farms’ expenditures on feed by half! The chicken farm would also provide manure to be used as fertilizer for the maize crops, and the Bbaale family could also generate income for the by grinding maize for other farmers.

A full “farm to table” operation will reduce the school’s expenses, provide an additional source of income, and continue advancing the school’s food program. In order to make this happen, COPI would like to purchase motors and solar panels to power the maize grinders in the village. As of August 2014, the cost for implementing this project is \$4,000.

UPDATE GIRL’S DORMITORY

There is a vacant house on the Circle of Peace School property that is owned by Morris Bbaale. He vacated the house in March 2013, and it has stood unused since then. It is spacious and in very good condition.

COPI would like to purchase this house from Morris

Muyinza Bbaale for use as a dormitory for the girls, who currently live in a congested, single room with two bunk beds. The house has two bedrooms, a storage room, and its own shower. It would give the girls some much needed space and privacy.

As of October 2014, the purchase price for the house is \$4800. We estimate that another \$2500 would be needed to convert it into a dormitory for the girls.

Purchasing this house and converting it to a girls’ dormitory is the first step in a larger plan for expanding and

developing the school’s facilities. COPI will be sharing more details about this plan, which includes purchasing adjacent property and constructing two additional buildings.

**CIRCLE OF PEACE
INTERNATIONAL**

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Circle of Peace International

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**ANNUAL GIVING
CAMPAIGN**

*Check your mail box in early
December—there is still time to
meet your Annual Tax
Giving deadline!*

Visit our website at
www.circleofpeaceintl.org



SAVE THE DATE!

**Spring Fundraising
Saturday, March 28, 2015
Taza, 5047 Forest Hill, Richmond, VA**



*COPI is a 501(c)(3) certified non-profit organization. All donations go to the Circle of Peace School.
There are no administrative fees, and all the services we provide are 100% volunteer.*