



Spring Trip Report 2015

300 Timothy St. Sturgis, MI 49091

telephone: 269-743-9161

web: www.smpionline.org

9 Years in East Africa

This year (2015) we celebrate our 9th year of travelling to and working in East Africa. What started out as Leadership Training seminars in Uganda has now evolved into Leadership Training in Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.

Farming in Uganda!

If you've been following us for any time you will also know

that our initial foray into Uganda has also developed into a Child Sponsorship program at Treasured Kids Primary School and a farm project dedicated to growing food to feed the 600 children attending TKPS their noon meal. While we have had some successes with the farm, we have also faced some challenges.



The Farm—early planting

The goal of growing enough produce to create income so the farm is self sustaining still remains elusive. Finding good workers has been the greatest challenge and overseeing the work has also been a weak area. But we press on and progress is being made. :-)



Vincent and his family

We now have several different pieces in place at the farm for its success. A family with, soon to be, four children have moved into the house. Vincent is a wonderful, Godly man who has a lot of expertise in farming. He is our new farm manager

and the big plus about this move is he is living on site to give direction and oversight to the workers. We are expecting this addition will make a significant difference in the operations at the farm with a greater harvest as the result. We have also hired an agronomist (Josan Wagaba) to work with us. He is a young man with a wonderful heart.

Training Leaders!

Our spring 2015 trip was one of the best yet for us! We offered 7 training seminars in 7 different locations. Two of the classes finished the courses and we were able to graduate 101 students in two locations. We experienced a huge breakthrough in Rwanda. Pastor Charles Mugisha with Africa New Life Ministries has joined with us and invited us to teach at his Bible School, the Africa College of Theology. This connection added 100 new students to the leadership training classes. We are very excited to be able to train young leaders in Rwanda.



Training in Kigali, Rwanda
100 new students

Child Sponsorships!

The Child Sponsorship program continues to expand and bless children at TKPS. Currently we have 85 children sponsored in the program along with 10 teachers and administrators.. We have our sights aimed at 100 child sponsors as our next goal. If you would like to sponsor a child contact us and we will help you get started . I feel unable to adequately describe to you the difference it makes to a child and their family. During a meeting on this trip we once again saw the raw evidence of the difference a sponsorship makes. A mother took the opportunity of being with us in the meeting to express her gratitude to us for the sponsorship of her child. Fighting back tears while talking, she said, "Who am I that God should bless me so greatly." She wanted us to pass along to you her thanks.



Some of our sponsored children

The Byler's In Uganda!

In January and February this year, our good friends and partners with SMPI, Ozzie and Evelyn Byler spent 6 weeks in Uganda. While Ozzie spent three to four days a week at the farm, Evelyn taught the children and staff at TKPS how to sew, knit and bake.

They are both experts in their field having run a fruit, produce and bakery business for many years. Evelyn took along supplies for the students to continue working with after she left. Ozzie helped organize and give direction to the farm operations. They were joined by Ken Lawrence and his two older children for

a couple weeks. Together they did some concrete work at the farm house to alleviate the erosion of the foundation and provide a runoff for the water. They had



The corn crib at the farm

troughs installed on the house, built a corn crib to store the harvest until needed and worked with a trained agronomist to test the soil conditions. We have been growing corn at the farm for several years now and as anticipated the soil was depleted of nutrients. Thanks to their expertise we have now begun to treat the soil to replenish it. This year the crops have been extended to include corn, beans, matoke (banana) trees, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, ground nuts, and sugar cane.

Projects!

For nine years we have been training leaders. Primarily we have been working in Uganda but as mentioned before we are now training in Rwanda and Burundi as well. To date we have completed 9 separate classes graduating approximately 400 students of leadership. Many of these students have taken the materials and continued to train others within their spheres of influence. We accepted this ministry, to train the trainers, and we are seeing it happen right before our eyes. On



Ozzie and Evelyn Byler. Wonderful partners with SMPI

this trip we heard more stories about what God is doing through our graduates and others still studying the courses. Students are gaining a confidence to initiate and step into ministries that beforehand they did not feel confident to attempt. Now they are encouraged and walking in things they never imagined possible.

One of our delights over the years of being involved here in Uganda has been the growing list of projects that have been accomplished. Practical projects initially began with the purchase of the land for the farm, clearing it to grow crops and building a house on the property for the workers.

This past year we have been able to pay off the debt on the housing unit purchased to provide accommodations for teachers at the school. Now 7 teachers and their families a have very good

place to live.

And then, in November, we were able to attend the dedication of a well at the farm that was made possible by a donation from one of our partners.

This well provides clean, potable water for 3000 adults and 4500 children in the neighborhood.

This year we have taken on the project of raising funds to replace the toilet facilities at Treasured Kids. We have already accomplished that goal and have sent the

money to complete this project. The headmaster of the school was especially excited and grateful since she is the one who has to deal with the health department during inspections each year. The toilets were completely inadequate and a problem for the school.

Thank you to all who are standing with us at SMPI. You are making a difference!

Love and Blessings!

Ross & Jennifer



The center (dark) building is the current toilet facility at the school. Boys to the left. Girls to the right



A toilet stall—nothing but a hole in the concrete floor