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Issue: 1

Welcome to The Mwebaza Foundation, Inc.

Here is the first edition of the new e-mail newsletter for the Mwebaza Foundation! You are receiving this newsletter because you have been involved with Mwebaza Foundation events, have given to this organization, or someone you know who is associated with the Mwebaza Foundation believes that you may be interested in this cause. We hope you will want to join in the work we are doing to make a difference in the lives of schoolchildren here and in Africa! To find out how you can help, please take a look at the light blue section at the bottom of this newsletter.

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to anyone you think would be interested in our organization and its work in Colorado and Africa. There is a link to do so at the bottom of this newsletter. And if this newsletter has been forwarded to you and you would like to join our mailing list, click on the "Join Our Mailing List" button in the column to the right. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, you can select "unsubscribe" at the bottom of this e-mail.

Thank you!
Dale Peterson, President

The start of a beautiful friendship...

The Mwebaza Foundation is an organization that was started at Niwot Elementary as a way to promote cross-cultural exchange between Niwot students and the students of Mwebaza Infant Primary School in Kyengera, Uganda. The Foundation was also created to help Mwebaza School educate and care for its disadvantaged youth. The Mwebaza Foundation is beginning to help other Colorado and African schools develop similar, education and service-based relationships.

Through the Mwebaza Foundation, Niwot students and their families raised funds to help the families at Mwebaza School construct a new classroom building to alleviate overcrowding. As a school community, Niwot also sent donated shoes, soccer balls, and t-shirts to its pen pals. Niwot's friends at Mwebaza School have, in turn, sent books and artifacts that represent their culture, faithfully maintained the pen pal letter exchange, and have documented the proper use of funds sent them with photographs taken on a camera purchased by Niwot families for Mwebaza School.

In the Summer of 2009, a group of local educators visited Uganda and saw firsthand how Mwebaza School has responsibly used the resources it has been provided. They even stayed in the school built with funds from Niwot families!

Now, in May 2010, the Mwebaza Foundation will be bringing Mwebaza teacher, Catherine Namatovu, to visit Niwot Elementary and the other Colorado partner schools. She will be teaching Colorado students and their families about African life.

And the love keeps growing! Four new partner schools!

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Mwebaza Board Member Teaches in Northern Uganda

During the summer, Mwebaza Foundation Board member, Mandie Victor, had the opportunity to teach in Northern Uganda - an area ravaged by a rebel war. As part of her teaching, Mandie began an after school writing club. Below are reflections two of her students wrote about their lives.

A Child of War

by Esther Adong

I am Esther Adong. I was born in Gulu. This is what I have experienced during war. When I was still young my mum told me that she delivered me in the bush due to the conflict which it has been taking place over 20 years.

One day, when I was 12 years old, my mum sent me to go and fetch water in the

The Mwebaza Foundation has begun building a cross-cultural partnership between another Colorado school, Coyote Ridge Elementary in Broomfield, Colorado and another African school, St. Paul School in Nkokonjeru, Uganda. This relationship looks to be every bit as successful and mutually-beneficial as the Niwot-Mwebaza relationship. In the Summer of 2009, several Mwebaza Foundation board members visited St. Paul School to begin laying the groundwork for this new partnership.

The Mwebaza Foundation is also fostering a partnership with Global Orphan Relief to assist a failing school in Silembe, Zambia. This Zambian school has recently been paired with Eagle Crest Elementary in Longmont, Colorado.

Through upcoming fundraisers, Eagle Crest and Coyote Ridge Elementaries hope to share some of their many blessings with their partner schools. These two Colorado schools have already begun pen pal relationships with and sent school supplies to their African partner schools. Through these cross-cultural friendships, the parents and staff of Eagle Crest and Coyote Ridge Elementaries hope to give the children of their communities an increased awareness of African cultures, and a desire to care for the underprivileged of the world.

A Visit to St. Paul Nkokonjeru

by Christa Keppler, Mwebaza Foundation Board Member

Many of you are familiar with the partnership forged last year between Coyote Ridge Elementary, the school where I was previously an assistant principal, and the St. Paul School. Visiting this summer was a dream come true, and without a doubt, a life-changing experience. I imagined it would be transformative, yet it was much more fulfilling, eye-opening, and awakening to the senses than I expected it would be.

Although there were several daily highlights along the journey, visiting St. Paul, in Nkokonjeru, was probably the most memorable, and unlike any experience I have ever had. There are permanent imprints in my mind of the children's beautiful smiles, their strong desire and eagerness to learn, their sense of hope and wonder, and how deeply they care about us.

The St. Paul School is in the heart of the jungle. Upon entering the village, we were greeted by a few dozen students, all singing songs and celebrating our arrival. The road narrowed into a small walking path on which we somehow managed to drive. Our car must have been the first to have ever traveled along that trail. For most of the children, we were the first white people they had ever seen.

During our stay in Nkokonjeru, I found myself slipping in and out of sheer joy and deep despair. There were emotional highs and lows throughout my visit to St. Paul. I soon came to learn that the

well. By then I got my jerican and started going where water is. While on my way to the well, and I am about to reached the well, I hear a crowd of birds flying and coming to me and I thought, "There is saying which it said that if the crowd of bird coming to you it shows the sign of bad thing."

So I felt afraid. I started thinking to go back without water, but I thought that there is no water at home and for little while the rebels caught me and they give me 2 slaps that I should tell them where my mum is. By then, I started taking them to my mum and by the time we reached home my mum show up. She started to run, but unfortunately they were having gun and one of them shot my mum. That happened in 2003.

War

by Ocen Denis

War! War!
Who are you?
Where do you come from
and who do you think you
are?
You do not care for
children, women, men and
adults.

Coming soon... The
Mwebaza Foundation
website! We'll keep
you posted!

Niwot Elementary's first fundraiser for Mwebaza School was a lemonade stand and garage sale-in an unexpected April snowstorm!

Eagle Crest Elementary just raised \$500 through a

majority of the children were orphans. Hearing their stories, I questioned how any child could endure what they have, and why should they. Many have lost parents or family members due to the devastation of AIDS. Most have tattered clothing, few wear shoes, and others are quite sick due to lack of food or medical care. I wondered how on earth they could ever concentrate enough to learn anything, especially with 110 students in a school house the size of one American classroom, and with their only meal in the day being a half cup of porridge.

Yet, what amazed me most from this trip was the students' strength, resiliency, and strong DESIRE and will to learn. From the outside, you could never tell the sorrow and grief they had to bare because of their circumstances. I was in awe of their cohesiveness as a community, whole-hearted expressiveness through singing, dancing, laughing, and the ways in which they embraced life. There were some students of whom I grew especially fond. I can still hear Oliva's voice singing, "Christa, you are my baby." The students took months to prepare song and dance performances for our arrival as well as for the luncheon we hosted. I realize just how much I have to learn from them.

During the trip, I also recognized that before we could focus on learning or educating the children, there was a higher priority: food. During the day, students receive one meal, which consists of diluted porridge or corn flour. It costs about five dollars a month to feed a child one serving of porridge a day, but many families don't even have enough funding to pay for this, so some children go hungry. Since schools are not subsidized by the government, it is up to parents to pay school fees in order to send their children to school. Many parents cannot afford to pay the dues, so it's up to the school to find the means (which they don't have.) Often, students end up not going to school. I started thinking about how many children I could feed in a month by giving up daily lattes.

Amidst the devastating poverty, there was a strong sense of pride among the people about their culture. We were fortunate to have experienced their culture first-hand when given a tour upon our arrival. We were chaperoned throughout the village learning about the 101 uses of the banana plant, meeting the uncle who hunted antelope with a spear to provide meat, participating in rituals with the village healer/witch doctor, dancing to African drumming into the late hours of the night, playing soccer with the children (which consisted of a tightly bound up plastic bag,) and introduced to the elders, which was a significant honor in their culture. Yes, we were culturally enlightened to their ways.

Although there's a significant distance that separates Colorado from Nkokonjeru, Uganda, I was amazed by how strong the friendship has grown between the schools. All the villagers expressed deep gratitude and appreciation for our partnership. The children and staff at St. Paul asked so many questions about Coyote Ridge and were eager to continue to deepen the relationship and partnership that already exists. I left there knowing that any small amount will help, and that EVERY monetary donation would be put to good use.

The school especially needs a new structure that can safely and adequately accommodate the students. Currently, they have one small structure with a leaking roof, not enough benches for the kids to sit on, and it's extremely cramped. The school has one flimsy

coffeehouse to purchase desks and chairs for Mapampi School in Zambia. This amount was doubled to \$1000 through a matching grant offered by another foundation!

Coyote Ridge Elementary is planning a used book sale fundraiser for April to help its partner school, St. Paul School in Nkokonjeru, Uganda.

In December, two couples in different parts of the U.S. collectively raised \$1500 for St. Paul School in Uganda by hosting cocktail parties in their homes. Those in attendance were invited to give a contribution. Soon, a Coyote Ridge Elementary family will be hosting a birthday party with a similar format to help St. Paul School as well. Please let us know if you are interested in planning a benefit party for the Mwebaza Foundation or one of its African partner schools.

A letter of thanks, from Catherine Namatovu, Headmistress of Mwebaza School, November 10, 2009 (abridged)

Wow! My Godliness! How can I begin expressing my happiness and sincere thanks over the successful book sale [at Niwot Elementary to benefit Mwebaza School]! I can not congratulate and thank you enough for doing this! I know you had to put in a lot of efforts to make it done! That was a miracle! I know it has been a big undertaking, and has required several advertisements! Send

blackboard that they move from one classroom to the next, as well as some chalk, dull pencils, a few benches for kids, and some lined notepads that are so tattered they're crumbling at the seams....and that is IT!

I forgot to mention the pen pal letters that adorn the walls. Yes, letters from the students at Coyote Ridge are the only "visuals" in their classrooms, and they hang them proudly to remind themselves of their connection with us here in the U.S. Honestly, no other teaching supplies exist. Given their vast needs, the teachers could have been crying out in desperation, but this wasn't the case....they are very humble and gracious people. I left St. Paul knowing that there are significant needs, and that any help will go a long way. The people of St. Paul School taught me to appreciate the simple things in life - namely, family, friends, and all the joys that life has to offer - if we take notice.

With gratitude,
Christa Keppler

About Mwebaza School

Mwebaza students gather in front of their new school building, built with funds raised by Niwot Elementary families and the Mwebaza Foundation.

Mwebaza School is approximately 12 miles from Uganda's capital city of Kampala. However, the community can hardly be considered "suburban" as it lacks amenities such as running water and modern sanitation associated with cities, and the fact that it can take over an hour to reach downtown Kampala due to poor roads and heavy traffic.

"Mwebaza" means "gratitude" or "thanksgiving" in the local Luganda language. The family of headmistress, Catherine Namatovu, was pressed to name the school "Mwebaza" by members of the local community who felt gratitude to the family for opening an elementary school in a neighborhood where no school had existed before. The Mwebaza Foundation, in turn, took its name from Mwebaza School as a way to reflect the gratitude felt towards those who have joined in with the work of the Foundation to assist disadvantaged African schools such as Mwebaza School.

The 150 students at Mwebaza School are all poor and over half are orphans. Many students cannot afford to pay the meager tuition payments and are allowed to attend for free.

Three years ago, the students at Mwebaza School became pen pals with the students at Niwot Elementary in Niwot, Colorado. Niwot is a town situated between the larger communities of Boulder and Longmont. Through the Mwebaza Foundation, students at Niwot Elementary and their families raised over \$32,000 to help the families at Mwebaza School construct a new classroom building to alleviate overcrowding.

Although the Mwebaza Foundation has helped Mwebaza School begin addressing some of its physical needs, there is more work to be done. Mwebaza School does not have the space or resources to serve children over the age of 10. Thus, older children must find other schools to attend, many of which are far away and more costly. Thus, for many community children, formal education ends when they are 10 years old. Ultimately, the Mwebaza Foundation would like to assist the school in developing the capacity to serve children up to age 14. Recently, a generous donation was given to the Mwebaza Foundation for the express purpose of purchasing land nearby the present Mwebaza School campus for the eventual construction of a "satellite campus" for older students.

Another issue for Mwebaza School is food. Many children who attend Mwebaza School receive their only meal for the day - a cup of millet porridge - at school. The staff of Mwebaza School realize that, if the children are not fed at school, they will not have the energy to focus on learning. However, the school struggles to gather the money needed to buy porridge for its students. The Mwebaza Foundation has helped with this by providing funds for porridge. The Mwebaza Foundation is also exploring, with the help of some Boulder-area philanthropists and innovators, ways to increase sustainable food production at Mwebaza and St. Paul Schools. Possible solutions include highly-efficient, easy-mulching "keyhole gardens" and the planting of fruit trees on school property.

my best "regards and congs" to the students, parents, teachers and friends at Niwot! May God rewards them more and have fruitful days a head of them! I know how hard it can be to save money! The recent funds has helped so much to improve the daily routines at Mwebaza School! I can still remember how my kids used to study from dusty rooms and some attending school bare footed! From few children now to over 150 kids! In fact, the daily routines at school has so much improved, and my kids are having productive days! Ha ha! Also my life is less stressful!

I really can say that this friendship is such of a kind! Now, next year we are putting up primary Four! Since we are having a free classroom from the ones that you constructed, we had a meeting with parents last week and we decided to put up another class for our kids [The money raised by Niwot can be used] to purchase "furniture", text books, scholastic materials and other needs! It would be a blessing for us to have a new classroom!

I will be sending the package [of letters for Niwot pen pals] next week! Do not worry, by the end of this month, it will be at your end! [Editor - It arrived in early December.] However, I know how one feels by getting a package from a friend! The primary two

and three kids did a wonderful job in writing them! Oh my Godliness! I know your kids must be so eager by now! Tell them that the package is on the way!

Do take care of yourself, and God bless you and your beautiful students,

Namatovu

How You Can Help the Mwebaza Foundation

The Mwebaza Foundation is administered by a volunteer Board of Directors and run with the generous help of dozens of adult and student volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Dale Peterson at mwebazafoundation@earthlink.net.

If you would like to join in the work of the Mwebaza Foundation by making a donation, please print out this form, fill it out, and send it with your check to the address below. Thank you for your support!

THE MWEBAZA FOUNDATION DONATION FORM

P.O. Box 353
Niwot, Colorado 80544-0353
mwebazafoundation@earthlink.net

Yes, I would like to contribute to the Mwebaza Foundation to help in meeting the academic and physical needs of African students. I may also choose to give a gift as a living tribute in honor of someone I care about or a memory of a loved one.

Enclosed is my check for the following:

\$500

\$100

\$50

\$20

Other: _____

In Loving Memory of:

Name _____

In Honor of:

Name: _____

Please send a memorial/honorary check acknowledgement to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

The Mwebaza Foundation is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organization. Under Internal Revenue Service guidelines, you may be entitled to deduct the full value of your gift.

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