

# SCAW



## NEWSLETTER

28 Pinehurst Crescent  
Islington, Ontario, Canada M9A 3A5

Phone: (416) 231-1841

Fax: (416) 231-0120

E-mail: [scaw@bellnet.ca](mailto:scaw@bellnet.ca)

Web Address: [www.scaw.org](http://www.scaw.org)

A charitable organization founded by Margaret and Murray Dryden

July, 2004

### UGANDA: May 28 - June 15, 2004: 5,000 Bedkits

**GRANT CLARK**  
**MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO**

A successful bedkit distribution begins many months before a child actually receives this special gift. In Canada, many people respond to the message of our charity by making a decision to donate money towards this important work. For some, this is a new experience. They have become aware of SCAW and believe that their act of charity should be directed to our organization. For others, this donation is another in a yearly commitment that has become part of their dedication to children throughout the world. Individual contributions, together with school and community groups, enrich the donation strength of our charity. In Memoriams and estate donations bring a sense of hope and happiness to children in distant and developing third world countries.

In Uganda, the effort required to prepare for a distribution is enormous. The Women from the Inner Wheel Club of Kampala have much to do once they receive our approval. They must first determine what villages will be offered these gifts. The communication with the villages, and then to the individual families, is difficult. Roads are often impassable, and villagers are often illiterate. Telephone contact is limited to a very few cell phones. The major hurdle is to make a village actually believe that this gift is real. One village official wrote to us: "When Reverend Father James Achara made mention of this support, it sounded miraculous to the ears of the listeners, but to many, it was still unbelievable. Here we are today, witnessing the physical distribution. Due to the limited number allotted to us, many children were locked out. Therefore, we wish and pray that this program continues in Uganda, to include many other children. As it is now, it's just like adding a pinch of salt in the ocean."

The village council, together with a member of the Inner Wheel Club of Kampala, selects the children. They must live in a house and they must be 6 to 12 years of age. A member of the Inner Wheel, as well as a village council member, each visit the homes to make sure the adults know this gift is for the child and it must not be sold. In many cases, there are more than five young children in the home, so we know the gifts will be well used and shared by many.

The Inner Wheel members have many other tasks to perform. They must make arrangements for all items in the bedkit to be made at the best possible prices. Items must be assembled, packed and stored until they are shipped by truck to the remote village sites. Security must be arranged so bedkit items are not stolen. Transportation to the distribution sites can be difficult as many roads often resemble bicycle paths.

The Inner Wheel members must also maintain accurate financial records. SCAW insists that all costs for assembly, storage and transportation of the bedkits must be the responsibility of the host organization. The donors to our charity can be reassured that every penny of their \$30 donation goes directly to the child!

On the day of distribution, all these months of preparation and work results in a child receiving a bedkit. The smile of appreciation is best represented by the words written by a beautiful young girl in 7<sup>th</sup> grade in a Ugandan village. She wrote: "Please convey our message to our loving parents of Sleeping Children Around the World together with their children who are now our friends. Dear chief guest, since we are now going to sleep well, we promise to keep our clothing and other things well. We shall now be smart and go to school smartly. Good bye to our parents overseas. Do not

forget us. Come back again." Perhaps the sincerity of this message is best understood when you realize that this little girl did not receive a bedkit, but was sharing in the happiness of others.

**LESLIE BANNER**  
**MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO**

The emotions felt by a travelling volunteer with SCAW are difficult to put into words. In this, my fourth distribution, and third to Uganda, I knew that I would experience the full gamut of emotions, and tried to prepare myself as a co-leader to the members of our team. For me, the absolute joy in returning to Uganda is heightened by the smiles and "*Snanths yoi*", thank you from the young recipients of the bedkits as they struggle to speak English to us to express their thankfulness. The over-joy demonstrated by the mothers as they help their children is often expressed in song and dance.

Uganda remains a study in contrasts for me: a country striving to move forward with a stumbling economy, grinding poverty and devastating diseases; a country with a beautiful climate, abundant fruits, vegetables and yes, children.

A dear friend gave me a book about Canada entitled "M is for Maple", an alphabet book to share with the children we met. I have chosen to describe Uganda by using the same format, "**M is for Matooke**"

**A** is for Africa where Uganda is situated, and for anthills taller than adults, providing much needed protein once a year when the ants emerge.

**B** is for bananas – 7 kinds to savour, and for bicycles, a precious tool for transportation of people, food, fuel and water.

**C** is for children who wave and smile and are fascinated by the *mezungas* (white people),

(continued on page 2)

**D. MURRAY DRYDEN - 1911 - 2004 - AN AMAZING LIFE!**

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(Uganda by Leslie Banner, Mississauga, Ontario, continued from page 1) and for coffee grown all over the country, but rarely enjoyed by Ugandans.

**D** is for driving on the left side of the road, and for women dancing at distribution sites in happiness at their children receiving bedkits.

**E** is for the equator which stretches through Uganda, and for “eh” which our two countries have in common.

**F** is for fruit: glorious pineapple, mangoes, papayas, passion fruit and jackfruit, and for flowers which bloom everywhere – flowers of every kind, colour and odour.

**G** is for green, a colour with depths of shades from black-green to lime-green, far more variable than can be described, covering the mountain sides.

**H** is for HIV/AIDS and the proactive stance the country has taken, and the families which have been devastated by this disease. It is also for hydro which shuts down on a regular basis for those fortunate enough to have it in Kampala, but eludes the majority of the population in the small villages.

**I** is for Inner Wheel of Kampala for providing SCAW’s link to Uganda, and for support for the families, children and women. The Inner Wheel is a team of strong dynamic women with the credo, “Service above self”.

**J** is for the journey made by women to the fields each day, often with babies on their backs; and the journey made by men each day, often many miles on foot or by bicycle, to sell their meager produce. It’s also for the long journey the recipient children have made to receive their precious bedkits.

**K** is for Kampala, the largest city in Uganda, with traffic jams, pollution from old vehicles, and markets and homes both grand and small.

**L** is for laughter pealing through the bus by the Ladies of the Inner Wheel as we inched our way to yet another distribution site.

**M** is for *Matooke*, a staple in the diet of all Ugandan families – a vegetable cooked in banana leaves – it’s very filling, but with little nourishment for distended bellies.

**N** is for the Nile River with its source in Uganda – a river which takes three months to travel to the Mediterranean.

**O** is for orphaned children caused by HIV/AIDS and other diseases – children who are raised by extended families and caring adults; and for the multitude of organizations that have trucks with names emblazoned on the sides, and for offices in Kampala.

**P** is for the pouring rain which ruts the roads, and causes landslides in the rainy season, resulting in over 250mm during the season.

**Q** is for the quietness of a Ugandan night – from 7:pm for almost 12 hours with no lights visible other than a small charcoal fire or a candle.

**R** is for the roads which defy any accurate description, where travelling 50 miles may take more than three hours.

**S** is for Sleeping Children Around the World, bringing a bed to children who have only slept on the dirt floor, plus a second set of clothes; and for smiles and singing at distribution sites.

**T** is for transportation; people walking, riding bicycles and scooters (used as taxis), and buses and trucks which move across Uganda delivering goods, produce and services. It’s also for tea which grows endlessly on hillsides and is picked to make incredibly fine African tea with hot milk and unrefined sugar. T also represents the tears we tried to hold back when we reached a new distribution site and viewed the sea of children dressed in their yellow, blue, red and green SCAW outfits.

**U** is for uniforms, a necessity for primary school children, uniforms which most children in rural area cannot afford, and therefore they grow up uneducated.

**V** is for villages which we found miles away from seemingly anywhere, at the end of a narrow path.

**W** is for water, clean water so necessary for life, and the many wells which have been donated by Canadians. It is also for women, the backbone of Uganda, and their children, carrying water in jerry cans on their heads. W also represents the waves to us by happy children as our bus traversed the countryside.

**X** marks the wells where children and women walk to each and every day.

**Y** is for the yellow intensity of the sun baking the red clay of the arid earth.

**Z** is for zebra and other animals that have now returned to Uganda: antelope, elephants, hippos, lions and baboons.

Uganda, its children, its hope for the future remains in my heart, and I can only hope to return again with SCAW bedkits to see yet again the magic in the smiles of the beautiful Ugandan children.

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## PHYLLIS RITTENHOUSE NORTH YORK, ONTARIO

How does a person describe an experience when reality slaps them in the face? That is

what I encountered on this, my first, distribution for SCAW.

It was June 1<sup>st</sup>, early Tuesday morning, when we, Doreen, Lynda, Grant, Leslie and I boarded the bus for the district of Kalisio. The centre was Lutooma, and our Inner Wheel Lady was Sarah. I was told we would be distributing 354 bedkits. Everything seemed to be going according to our leader’s instructions, so I felt very comfortable.

Then we pulled into the site, and I couldn’t believe my eyes. There they were, 354 children, dressed in their new shorts and vests (red, yellow, green and dark blue), all in a perfect line, waiting as they had been for some time. The look of anticipation on their faces (those beautiful dark eyes which would eventually haunt me) was powerful. Could this be true, I wondered?

I don’t know why, but I started to sing to them: “Do, Re, Me . . .”, and they responded with beautiful voices; and the lump in my throat made it difficult for me to continue.

My position with the team was to have the children hand me the donation labels that were given to them after their pictures were taken. I loved doing this as I could touch them, their hands, their faces, and look into those eyes which were confused, afraid, often amazed. Of course they were – for somebody was paying attention to them and showing love, tenderness and giving them gifts.

I was told the children had walked for miles over the mountain and would have to go back, carrying their bedkits on their heads.

There was one boy in particular that didn’t seem to want to leave. He kept smiling at me, but his eyes were sad – very sad. I said, “Let me take your picture with me”, thinking then he would go home. It was customary to have lunch at the distribution site. After lingering for a while, we were told to prepare to leave for our next distribution.

To my surprise, there was the same boy, standing alone, waiting for me, and then he spoke for the first time. “I do not have a mother or father,” he said. “I am an orphan.” All of a sudden, I knew I had to take care of this child. This was why I was sent on this wonderful adventure! Marten is indeed an orphan. He is in grade 7 and lives with another family. From now on I will support him for as long as is required. Sarah will see to his needs and keep me informed.

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There are 18 million children in Uganda who are living under circumstances that seem impossible in which to survive. Many of them don't survive, they end their lives the same way they started out – hungry, dirty, uneducated, hopeless; and yet they dance, sing, smile and just want to know that somebody cares.

I don't know if I will be able to make another SCAW trip, but my mission is only beginning. You will be informed of my progress. We must not turn our backs on the people of Uganda for there, but for the Grace of God, go I!

## **DOREEN ST. CROIX HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA**

On May 28<sup>th</sup>, I kissed my children good-bye as they set out for their day of school or work, then I said goodbye to my husband who was thousands of miles away in Brazil. I then set out on my longtime dreamed of journey. My dream, was to make a difference to the lives of children in Africa, no matter how large or small.

No form of media could have fully prepared me for the extraordinary experience awaiting me. The extreme poverty, the sadness and the lack of hope behind the beautiful eyes of the women and children was now a reality, — though they all wore smiles and gave warm handshakes.

We arrived at our distribution site to a sea of colour, as children with the most beautiful faces you could ever imagine patiently waited for their gift of a bedkit. In the past couple of weeks, I have witnessed the true beauty and strength of these children of Uganda.

These children had to walk many miles, for many hours, some over mountains and most through rugged terrain, to get to the sites chosen. Many of them are bare foot, and come to us with open sores on their feet and other parts of their bodies. Some are blind, some crippled, yet through it all their spirit shines. Each day brings children who are sick, malnourished from the lack of vitamin A, and those very tired, hungry and thirsty from their long journey to receive their gift from the kind people of Canada.

There were times when the helplessness I felt became overwhelming, and I had to remind myself that I am giving and contributing with my team to make a

difference in the lives of each and every child we meet. It is my hope that my touch and smiles have assured those children of just how very deeply they are cared for by others.

On our drives to the distribution sites, we saw many children, some very young and some older, school-aged. We saw children wearing their school uniforms, however most of the Uganda's children do not attend school. While education is said to be free, parents are still required to pay for items such as books, toilet paper, uniforms, broom, even mosquito spray. These expenses prevent a large number of children from having any opportunity to become educated. Just to think in Canada, education is available for every child equally.

The memory of the children's faces, their confusion, yet their happiness at receiving a mattress that will provide them with a proper, well-deserved rest, will remain vividly in my heart and mind.

I must include the very special moments when our distribution had ended and some of the children and mothers would dance and sing in thanks. At times, there were older children who sang special songs of thanks for our friendship and kindness. The boys and girls would gather and perform to the beat of a drum, with voices so beautiful as they danced like pretty flowers blowing in the breeze. These children did not all receive bedkits, but gave thanks for the gifts given to others in their community. It truly was amazing to see the lack of jealousy in those children. Instead, gratefulness was evident in all the children.

Driving through the towns, we frequently experienced the love and caring behaviour of children for each other. It was incredible to watch as little children carried babies on their backs, and held hands, helped and shared the little they had with others. I witnessed this sharing as I gave one child a drink, and she ensured that all ten children around her received an equal portion. This display of caring showed the uniqueness of the Ugandan children.

The physical strength of the children was quite a sight to behold. I watched, in almost total disbelief, as children carried large containers of water from their village wells home to their families. These containers, as well as food and wood, were all carried on top of the children's heads.

This journey has been incredible for me. I have many memories to hold in my heart, and to share with my family and friends.

My special thanks go to my team members for their wonderful spirit and support. Also, many thanks and much love go to the Inner Wheel Ladies of Kampala who know the true love and loyalty to their country and the children.

I look forward to a time when I will again return to Uganda. Until we meet again, God Bless the Children of Uganda – God Bless the Children of the World!

## **LINDA HUFF ETOBICOKE, ONTARIO**

What a wonderful experience it was travelling to Uganda as part of a SCAW team. This was my second SCAW distribution (the first was to Chennai, India), and I thought I had somewhat of an idea of what to expect. But I still could never have been prepared for the extreme poverty and the feeling of hopelessness in Uganda. However, despite the impoverished lifestyle of so many of the Ugandan children, they always managed to greet us with big smiles and enthusiastic waves.

Remember, the absence of a welfare system in Uganda, and the great number of poor, uneducated people, make life for those in need extremely hard.

The Uganda trip consisted of 15 distributions carried out over a period of 11 days. We began by travelling west from Kampala to within a few miles of the Congo border – keeping us on the road for 5 days.

Our first distribution was held at a private home in Lutooma, and the sight of hundreds of small children with black skin dressed in brightly coloured clothes was very emotional. After a very successful distribution of over 350 bedkits, we travelled over a rough road with potholes like I'd never seen before to Kinoni. It was hot and late in the afternoon, yet the children were so well behaved. I will never forget the looks of anticipation, and in some cases, fear on the children's faces as they were preparing to receive their bedkits. This was the first time they had ever received a "free gift", or had their picture taken.

The following day, after driving many miles over very rough roads, and up and down narrow mountain roads, where there had been rock slides and fallen trees, we finally arrived at a community centre in Rushanje. Once again, about 400 children were eagerly

(continued on page 4)

(Uganda, by Linda Huff, Etobicoke, Ontario, continued from page 3)

awaiting our arrival, even though many had set out at 4 a.m. and travelled more than 20km. over the mountains to our distribution area. As we left, we could see in the distance these same children trudging back up over the mountains to their villages, each with his/her bedkits on their heads. What a wonderful sight that was!

We must also remember that these distributions, and the ones to follow, would never be possible without the tremendous efforts of the Women of the Inner Wheel. They choose the children who are to receive bedkits. They make sure all items have been made to specifications, and that they are ready on time. They keep the entire distribution well organized and running smoothly.

Following this distribution, we visited a maternity hospital where the Inner Wheel Women had donated many hospital beds and some hospital supplies, including some leftover mattress pieces previously donated by the manufacturer, which had been cut into small pieces and wrapped with a waterproof material to make small mattresses for the incubators.

Over the next two days, we had small distributions, but long days due to tireless travel over almost impassable roads. At one school site, all the bedkits were given to orphans who were living with relatives. This was wonderful to see as there are thousands of orphans in Uganda, due mainly to AIDS, other diseases and poverty. Despite this, you could see the happiness in the faces of these beautiful children as they said "Thank you" and were handed their bedkit.

Travelling on to Kihihi, we had a great distribution of over 500 bedkits at a local school. It concluded with many children

and mothers doing an African dance, and then five different children presented each SCAW member with a lovely handmade gift.

Our Western travel ended at Kabale with a well organized distribution of over 500 bedkits. At this site, more than 20 blind children received bedkits. They all had canes, but still needed a lot of assistance. It was very emotional to see these children receive such a precious gift. Once again, it was so apparent how important your donations are and how valuable these bedkits are to the children.

Returning to Kampala, we then headed northwest toward Hoimo. Along the way, we encountered more narrow winding, bumpy roads that seemed like they would never end. We also travelled through some of the worst poverty areas yet (tiny homes made from mud and cow dung, with children dressed in mere rags). However, after three efficiently run distributions, over 800 happy children (many extremely small) left smiling, carrying their bedkits on their heads, some walking many miles back to their small villages. Throughout most of the distributions, we were shocked by the condition of their dirty little bare feet which, in most cases, had never worn shoes – some actually borrowed shoes for their photo shoot.

At Hoimo, the most northern distribution site, we found a tremendous number of very small children. Some of them were crying and frightened by the sight of white people – scared too of the entire experience of having their picture taken. Once again, the ladies of the Inner Wheel worked hard to ensure a successful distribution.

Three hours later, we arrived at Kokina to hand out over 350 bedkits, making a total of nearly 750 bedkits distributed that day. Here we met some of the most respectful parents helping their children to carry their new gifts. Mothers kneeling, and fathers shaking hands while saying "Thank you" demonstrated just how much this gift means to them, and it was overwhelming to accept their thanks on behalf of the donors. Your gift of a bedkit is invaluable.

The final three distribution sites took us east of Kampala. At the first site, a reporter took a video of the distribution which was televised on the local news that evening. Once again, the hospitality and gratitude shown to us were enormous. We enjoyed a delicious lunch of typical African foods prepared by the local people, and then we were presented with a colourful woven mat made out of palm leaves.

On our final day, we distributed almost 600 bedkits at two different schools. Although it leaves you with a sad feeling, there were two bright spots in the day. One extra bedkit was given to a young boy in a wheelchair, by the Inner Wheel. I really hope more children like him can become recipients in the future. The other highlight was our visit to a young boy's thatched-roof home, made with mud and bricks. This boy had received a bedkit a year ago, and he was still using the mattress and wearing the outfit. More evidence as to how much a bedkit is valued!

The hardest and most emotional part of each distribution is to see so many parents and children waiting until all have been given out, still hoping to get one. It makes you realize how great the need is for continuing contributions.

Remember, these beautiful children are born into poverty with little hope for the future. Fortunately, due to generous donors and volunteers, SCAW is making a difference in their lives and giving these children a feeling of hope. Today, 5,000 Ugandan children know that someone really does care!

## **THANK YOU**

**for your  
contribution to this  
Uganda trip**

**Black's Photography** for  
photofinishing

**Champion Photochemistry  
Limited** for continuously  
funding film and photofinishing  
costs since 1986.

**Konica Canada Inc.** for  
donating film

**The Printing House  
(Russ Cosman)**  
**5120 Dundas Street West**  
**Etobicoke, Ontario** for the  
printing of this newsletter

**Kay Kelly,  
Harry Keating and  
Maurice Kowanetz**  
for publishing this newsletter

**Donors and Volunteers!**

### **NEXT SCHEDULED DISTRIBUTION TRIPS**

**AUGUST, 2004  
SRI LANKA  
4,000 BEDKITS**

**TANZANIA  
4,000 BEDKITS**