

The Commitment of Two Humanitarians Make a Difference for Orphaned Children in Uganda

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The commitment to provide aid to handicapped orphaned children in Kampala, Uganda, by a club member of the Rotary Club of Kelowna Sunrise and his wife back in 2005 has resulted in an exciting humanitarian project which now provides support and care for nearly 500 children.



The volunteer work of Club member Dieter Howald and his wife Gisela actually started in Uganda in 2001 when they both joined a medical mission for the Uganda Ministry of Health and the Rotary Foundation. Their volunteerism with the team took them to Uganda on four different missions from 2001 to 2007. While associated with this mission, they were introduced to the newly inaugurated Rotary Club of Kampala Sunrise that wished to partner with an overseas Rotary club to commence with the development of a project to support orphans. Dieter, a Rotarian at that time with the Rotary Club of Steveston in District 5040, was so inspired with the goals outlined for the project by the club that he took on the challenge with his wife to help this new fledgling Rotary club to work with the orphanage of the Good Shepherd Home in Kampala which provided a home and care for 140 severely handicapped children at that time.

Through their connections with the Canadian Rotary medical team, Dieter and Gisela began to ship much needed medical equipment and supplies, donated clothing, shoes, and soccer uniforms, school books and supplies and non-perishable food in containers that the medical team was shipping to Uganda for their project. This continued for several years.

In 2008 Dieter and Gisela moved to the Okanagan and as a new member of the Rotary Club of Kelowna Sunrise, he easily persuaded the club to provide additional support to the Good Shepherd Home in

Kampala. As a result of the club's support and committed ownership, the project focus then changed dramatically.

This prompted them to seek out funds from friends and various organizations and to implement community fundraising events. A great source of funding was acquired from Rotary clubs in District 5060, particularly the Rotary Club of Kelowna Sunrise, from the Rotary Club of Kampala Sunrise, and from Designated Simplified Grants from District 5060. In the first year of this focus, \$12,000 was raised which provided food for the next twelve months. Uganda was not spared in the recent worldwide financial crisis. Food prices rose sharply resulting in the need to raise \$16,000 for the annual food budget.



Dieter communicated that while the donations have been stable in recent years, the number of orphans at the home continues to increase which has created a dilemma in how the present program is financed. With the number of children at the orphanage swelling to 480 children one year ago, it is clear that the focus must now change again but in a way which will enable the orphanage to become self-sustainable.

Dieter and Gisela returned to Uganda in February of 2013 at which time they held meetings with Rotary partners, the management of the Good Shepherd Home, and other Ugandans with the purpose of establishing long term goals and strategies focused on creating a program that would provide the Home with the means to become self-sustainable. As a result, planning is now in place to secure club funding, a district grant and a global grant from the Rotary Foundation to enable such a sustainable program to proceed in the near future.

Dieter shares that "we hope that the orphaned children will be able to look back some day, with pride and dignity on a project that they will perpetuate for the betterment of their own kind, long after Rotary's help is no longer required."

Note: At the present time, club member Pat McAllister, with the assistance of the club's Foundation Sub-Committee, has taken a leadership role in developing specific goals and strategies, a plan of implementation, and the means of financing this new program.