



Ugandan students live out Calgary Rotarian's legacy

by NIKKI KALLIO

Before George Kasumba was a teenager, he had endured more tragedy than most people can imagine.

His parents were killed in the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Kasumba and his siblings survived, but none of his other relatives had. So the children were taken to a United Nations refugee camp in Uganda, and they later met basic needs through a nongovernmental organization, which suspended its activities in Uganda in 2001.

Kasumba lost hope of continuing his education. But then he encountered a member of his village connected with the Rotary Club of Kyotera, who told him about a new college scholarship program.

This program is the legacy of George H. "Curly" Galbraith, a 60-year member of the Rotary Club of Calgary who once served as vice president of Rotary International. He was so

active in the club, including making birthday calls to about 500 Rotarians over 20 years, that he was known as "Mr. Rotary."

When Galbraith died in 2010, his widow, Doris, wanted to ensure that his life would be honoured. The result is the Curly Galbraith Global Memorial, which has raised more than \$132,000 to send about 50 young adults through higher education programs in Uganda, says Past District Governor Garth Toombs, a member of the Rotary Club of Calgary and a charter member of the memorial committee.

The memorial arose from the Calgary club's Taking Rotary Assistance to Communities and Children (TRACC) program, which helped more than 750 AIDS orphans in three southwest Ugandan communities – Masaka, Kalisizo, and Kyotera. The Calgary Rotarians suggested the scholarship project as

a way to ensure that the children helped by TRACC would have an education.

Uganda is a nation of 40 million people that has weathered deep turmoil. In past decades, it has endured rule by dictators, violent internal struggles, and severe economic instability. Notable to the memorial's success is that each scholarship recipient found a job after completing school – a substantial feat in a country that has the highest youth unemployment rate in Africa, which some estimates put as high as 80 per cent, Toombs says.

Doris Galbraith launched the memorial with a \$25,000 donation, which has been supplemented by donations from other Galbraith family members, individual donations, and funds from the Calgary club and six other area Rotary clubs.

Need is determined by a committee of Rotarians from the three Ugandan communities. Each selected student is assigned a Rotarian as a mentor.

The memorial is a "life-giver," says Francis Kyaluzi, a member of the Rotary Club of Kalisizo

who has served on the committee since its inception. "After getting employed or starting work on their own, they support their siblings who are still in need of schooling," he says. "And the community is very proud as they see these children growing into responsible and self-reliant citizens."

It costs about \$3,000 for each student to complete three years of education in Uganda, including housing, in the field of their choosing. Students have studied in areas such as education, dentistry, computer science, pharmacy programs, nursing, carpentry, or agriculture.

In November 2015, Toombs and other Calgary Rotarians travelled the 13,500 kilometres to Uganda and met with students, talking with them about their classes or new jobs. They also talked about how students planned to give back once they had graduated.

Kasumba is already doing just that. He's coordinator for community services with Rudeser, an NGO that implemented TRACC activities on behalf of the Kyotera club. And he founded Gebrah, an organization that helps build HIV/AIDS awareness, strengthens the savings and income of local residents, and ensures food security.

Kasumba says the scholarship program helped him change not only his life, but also the lives of those around him. "Most important of all, I got new parents – the Rotarians both local and international," he says. "Believe me, I and my young siblings are no longer orphans."