

Doctor outlines plan for Uganda school project

Nadia Hall

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Raphael Loutoby (Photograph by Akil Simmons)

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Raphael Loutoby visited Uganda and saw first-hand how students were getting the short end of the stick.

In Mitooma, a rural area in the western part of the country, high school students were crammed into a small classroom with few resources.

But with the help of Hamilton Rotary Club, Dr Loutoby hopes to build a new school and launch a literacy programme. Once he raises the necessary money, which he estimates to be between \$150,000 and \$200,000, he believes he

can complete the project in two years.

“I visited the site and was able to see how unfortunate those students are,” Dr Loutoby told *Lifestyle*.

“They have to walk, sometimes without food, for over an hour every morning to go to the school. The facility is inappropriate. It is too small. Two classes are taught in one classroom with two different topics or they take lessons in the open air.

“They have no lab, no computer room, no library, no science equipment — the kitchen is a very small shack.”

Originally from Martinique, the kidney specialist moved to Bermuda four years ago to take up a job at King Edward VII Memorial Hospital. He joined Hamilton Rotary in 2015.

The club partnered with Emma Outteridge, an ambassador for a school for orphans in Uganda this year. Together, they purchased a school bus for Kaaso students and raised \$17,000 for a water catchment system.

With Ms Outteridge gone, Dr Loutoby was thrilled that Hamilton Rotary’s work in Uganda would continue.

“Bermuda has a tradition of giving to this community,” he said. “[Kaaso] has been entirely supported by the international community, but mostly by Rotary International. We are learning from Kaaso to help Mitooma.”

Dr Loutoby’s project will create a new high school, with a computer lab, a library and a science lab for the more than 250 students; 50 will board. The avid traveller and keen climber visited both schools while travelling through Uganda in June.

He noted the similarities between the two and hoped Mitooma might benefit from what has been accomplished at Kaaso. The school was founded by an

orphan for orphans more than a decade ago.

“Over the years, the school has grown a lot from a very humble beginning and very modest resources,” Dr Loutoby said.

“Because of the generosity of multiple organisations, which have partnered with Rotary Club in Uganda, they were able to accomplish multiple projects in the school and all of those small projects make the school a success.”

Rotary International funded a green house, a piggery, a paediatric clinic, a computer room and a library at Kaaso. The group also established an empowerment programme to help the students. Dr Loutoby hopes to mirror it all at Mitooma.

“Those children willing to work would benefit from the generosity of the international community,” he said. “It’s not about donating money, it’s about helping a group of students to get the knowledge they need to be prepared in their life.

“[For the empowerment group] we give each person a pig, a goat, and some feed. They will grow those things and after they will be able to empower another group of 25. That will continue to empower other people.

“This is not something new, but from Kaaso I learnt what can be done. A lot of the kids from this school graduate to become physicians, lawyers, professionals.”

The hope is to eventually partner with a local school in Bermuda.

“This will give some students in Bermuda the opportunity to participate in a project with peers who are in a less fortunate area,” he said.

“They will learn that they have to take advantage of what they have in Bermuda and they will know that everybody is not as fortunate.”

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