

British Columbia Forest in Uganda Project

In October 2010, Rtn. Peter Ackhurst of the Rotary Club of Whistler and his wife Janie had a memorable visit to Uganda as guests of the Rotary Club of Muyenga. Among other places, they visited the 74 acre pine forest in Southern Uganda, sponsored by the Rotary clubs of Whistler and Kitmat (British Columbia) and Muyenga (Uganda) through a Usd.31,300 Matching Grant.

The co-operation of the 3 clubs followed a G.S.E. tour between District 5040 in British Columbia, Canada, and District 9200 in East Africa led by Rtn. John M. Mpagi in 2008. Seeing how forested British Columbia was, John promoted the idea of a reforestation project in Uganda which was picked up by Whistler and Kitmat clubs with the support of the then District Governor Dean Rohrs.



In 2009 74 acres were ploughed into planting condition and pine seedlings planted by the local community. Between the tree lines the 100 women members of Kabira Community Corps (R.C.C.) affiliated to R.C. Muyenga planted maize, Irish potatoes, peanuts and onions with the use of fertilisers and pesticides and under the supervision of two agricultural extension officers. Pine seedlings were also given to the community to plant on their private plots.

Apart from introducing reforestation in the area to improve the environment, modern farming of maize, onions, Irish potatoes etc. has been introduced. So far each of the 100 women R.C.C. member now earns about Usd. 1500 per annum as compared to Usd.300 before the project.

The forest was named British Columbia Forest in recognition of the International sponsoring clubs. Impressed by the success of this project, Rtn. Peter has embarked on fund raising for a second phase of the project where another 26 acres will be planted with pine and crops grown as in the first phase. Passion fruits, a new crop in the area, will be introduced on 10 acres to benefit 100 unemployed/under employed youth. The youth will be organised into a co-operative union to enable them market the produce and manage their savings for further economic development. Each youth is expected to initially earn about Usd.2500 per year.

The success of this project and the visit of Rtn. Peter and Janie are a clear manifestation of Rotary's work to Build Communities and Bridge Continents.