

Hi Mr. Tomsic (*Alan Tomsic, District International Service Director*),

So good to hear you are doing well. My mom mentioned that the Rotary club is interested in another Uganda project. My best friend, maid of honor in my wedding, and fellow Uganda peace corps volunteer Erin Lawless started her own nonprofit in Uganda when we lived there and it's still going strong today.

Erin runs a small non-profit called Hope of the Generation Uganda (HOGU). HOGU was founded back in 2005 when she was a Peace Corps Volunteer. The organization uses creative education techniques (like music, drama, dance and sports) to teach young and old about HIV/AIDS prevention. HOGU is made up of 30 local community volunteers that donate their time to make a difference in their own village of Buwagi and the surrounding villages in the area. HOGU has undertaken many special projects over the years and in 2007 they came together to start a private community school. The goal was to provide children with a higher quality education than the government schools in the area. For more information go to <http://www.hogu.org/>

They are currently trying to add on classrooms to a school they began years ago. HOGU's school is a place where caring teachers welcome orphans and vulnerable children into the classroom despite their family's hardships, where HIV positive children are included and embraced by faculty and other students, where children get breakfast and lunch, and participate in extra curricular activities like school plays, soccer and volleyball and have access to a library and games at HOGU's resource Center. This is a very unique educational experience but one thing has been lacking for years...secure walls, cement floors, and a sturdy roof! The physical structure to house 250 children a year is very, very poor. The school is made out of scraps of wood and cardboard.

The classrooms tend to be overcrowded and it is difficult for children to learn in class when it is raining or other classes are very loud. Teachers and staff have overcome these challenges but now is finally the year when the teachers and parents of the children decided to start construction on a school that is safe, secure and a permanent place for children to learn and grow. The school not only provides education to nursery through 7th grade, but also works in partnership with HOGU that provides employment to HOGU volunteers. When HOGU members complete their education in the field of teaching they are guaranteed a teaching job at the school.

Their goal is to complete two full classroom blocks that will include 8 classrooms in total. HOGU is an established 501C3. Erin's email address is lawless136@gmail.com and her phone number is [\(516\) 477-3472](tel:5164773472). Erin, Alan's phone number is [985-863-2674](tel:9858632674). I think this could be a great start to another amazing Uganda project. Let me know what else I can do to help this be a success for you both!

*Michelle Joffe (former Peace Corps volunteer in Uganda, native of Slidell, and recipient of grants from Rotary Clubs of Slidell, Northlake-Mandeville, and Slidell Northshore for her work at an orphanage for HIV/AIDS victims)*

Hello Mr. Tomsic,

I am so glad Michelle connected us! Michelle and her family have been so supportive of what we have been doing in Uganda over the years! Michelle's work has been amazing there and I know she has always appreciated your support and that of the Rotary Club. I was actually have come to come hear her speak to your club several years ago when we just returned to the US. Rotary is such a strong group to have on your side when trying to do this work!

Michelle's email gave you a really good overview of what we have going on right now. I have attached some photos of our school in its current state. Our goal is to complete 2 full classroom blocks, each classroom block has 4 classrooms in it. We have broken ground to start a foundation and are trying to build the school little by little (hence our fundraising campaign name "Brick By Brick").

We run several programs through the nonprofit, so even though the school was founded in 2007 we have not yet tried to raise enough money to build the school (a very expensive project) and run our programs at the same time...until now. This year the Ministry of Education was threatening to shut us down if we did not start construction. We started putting together some money from the community members in Uganda and have been able to start the foundation of one classroom block. We are doing online fundraising to bring in some more money to keep construction going but even that will not be enough to get us to full completion. We would be so excited if your Rotary Club would be interested in working with us.

Please let me know if there is a time you are available to talk about this further either during the day or in the evening. Anything your club could do to help us would be appreciated.

Best,

*Erin Lawless (former Peace Corps volunteer in Uganda, HOGU Founder and President of US Board of Directors)*