

# Connect Africa Foundation



## "Leave Shoes at the Door, Bring in Curiosity"

This might have been the sign outside the entrance to the brand new Library on the Connect Africa campus in Jogo. On the steps were scores of flip flops belonging to the children that come for educational enrichment, porridge and play. And inside excitement, laughing of eager students choosing books, chatting a mile a minute, joyful to read to each other and to us. Gosh, this was fun!



Our band of 7 CAF supporters from four congregations traveled to Uganda in September to experience the reality we had learned of in power point presentations. We saw how co-directors, Lynn and Charles work tirelessly to improve the future for families they work with - currently 60 students in nursery through university.

Each sojourner traveled with 50 pounds of books. On this Saturday, we were blessed to invite the children into the library for the very first time and charged with introducing them to the basics of reading a library book! They sat with us on the floor, or at a table, reading books, pouring over the pictures, carefully turning the pages and re-shelving the books when done. Squeals of joy vibrated throughout the room especially when a Pop-Up book was discovered! One student, Joseph, 5 years old, held a book with one word and one picture to a page, sounding out each word. After four tries, he smiled jubilantly successfully reading the entire book!



Now that we are home, images flash in rapid succession across our cerebral cortex: schools without roofs, carefully written black board lessons for the day, red clay dusting bare feet, a soccer ball fashioned from plastic bags and bits of twine, bicycle tire hula hoops and an unending sea of faces. Children, teachers, mothers, grandmothers, university students; all with bright eyes and open hearts. In a simple small church the elders stand to greet and welcome us. A field mouse runs across the kneeler as we stand, already overcome with an incredible sense of privilege. Any words we might speak pale in comparison to what goes unsaid by those gathered; those who have nothing but offer everything. Looking to the rear of the room, the worn but carefully mended school uniforms of many young girls blur into a sea of pink as tears fill our eyes. Suddenly and acutely aware of the abundance of our lives, the opportunities given us and staggered by the disparity, we struggle to speak. The words form, yet they feel inadequate, as we implore the girls to study their lessons, that the world might be opened to them as it was for us. Blinking to clear our eyes that we might see theirs, in that instant we feel connected to them and their unfailing hope of what joys tomorrow might hold.



On our first Saturday back we miss waking to the chattering children, singing birds,

crowling roosters and the occasional cow and pig snort. The beautiful trees, shrubs, and flowers. So many smiling faces filled with gratitude. The poverty, the traffic, the roads are all part of the big picture adding reality to the pastoral grounds of the Guest House. Meeting the Jaja's, conversing with the university students and listening to each tell their story has touched us deeply. We have learned so much about the human condition where joy is apparent, hope is alive, kindness abounds-welcome surprises all.



What has impacted us most is witnessing the Connect Africa dream! We are amazed with all that Lynn and Charles have accomplished and their desire to do more. To be part of their dream for a moment, to experience their love, care and hope for each of their children, young and old, and their Jaja's has been an overwhelming experience.

**Our challenge is to share with you the wonder that is Connect Africa. In recognition of their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we urge you to contemplate visiting, and to give generously.**

Maria and Will Bergmann, Beatrice Kayigwa, Jane Griesbach,  
Kathryn and John White and MaryAlyce Worden

