

Our Own Home

A refuge for orphans living with HIV/AIDS in Jinja, Uganda



Dear friends,

www.africaourownhome.org

April, 2008

Good morning! As I write it is 9:30 on Thurs. morning in Uganda. In my hometown of Casper, WY it's 11:30 on Wed. night! Our day is beginning as yours is ending. My dad jokingly asks me if this means I know the future. :o) Sometimes I wish I could know a thing or two about what tomorrow holds, but I'm not sure it would really make life any easier. I know the One who holds the future, and that has to be enough for me.

In November when we welcomed our first six children, I certainly could not have guessed that four months later we would have thirty-seven! Not one of them would I trade, from our youngest, four-year-old Natasha, to our oldest, fourteen-year-old Lydia (even on the days when I question my sanity)! Every one is a gift from God, and I am daily reminded of the value of each life as I observe my children's very individual personalities, strengths, and weaknesses.

Lydia Kyaterekera came to us as a surprise two weeks ago! With thirty-five children, we thought we were more than full, but after hearing her story we couldn't refuse. Lydia's parents died eight years ago, leaving the little girl in the care of her brother. Knowing the child was HIV positive, the brother refused to send her to school or to help her to get medicine in any way. He told her that **"she was going to die anyway, better sooner than later."** Left all alone, Lydia could easily have given up hope and surrendered to her apparent fate, but her strong faith in God and belief in the meaning of her name gave her the will to press on in spite of her circumstances. You see, Kyaterekera means "God will provide for the poor".



Beautiful Lydia at Easter

When Lydia's health began to decline, she knew she needed help. The ARV drugs that could save her life are only available in town, and her village was hours away. Her brother would not give her any money to pay for the transport, preferring her to die quickly and alleviate him of the "burden" of her care. Did that stop Lydia? Not at all. A neighbor helped her get to town to an organization that would give her free food. Since Lydia's brother was not feeding her properly, it would have been nice for her to eat the food herself. But Lydia wanted to solve the whole problem. She sold the food, and used the money to buy not only food for herself, but also to pay for transport so that she could continue coming to town to get ARVs, which are always available free, if you can make it to the government hospital. She continued this cycle of commuting to town, getting the free food, selling it, and getting her medicine completely on her own for three years!

Then, it all fell apart. The organization stopped providing food. This meant that Lydia had nothing to sell to get money for transport, which also meant that she couldn't get the medicine she desperately needed. In addition to this, her health was declining further. The little girl used her last bit of "food money" to go to the hospital one final time. She broke down crying and told the nurse at the hospital her story. "Now I am going to die, because my brother won't help me and I have no way to get my medicine now!" Filled with compassion, the nurses gave Lydia money for food and transport, but they knew she needed something more sustainable for the future. They brought her to Our Own Home.

Now Lydia is attending school for the first time in years. At fourteen she is starting in fourth grade and trying her best to catch up to her peers. She dreams of becoming a doctor one day so that she can help children like herself. When asked about her life, she gives all the glory to God, saying, "Mukama kyaterekera omunaku tekivuunda." Which means, "What God has prepared for the poor will not rot!" She has a ready smile and bright personality. On Sunday, she put on a lovely new skirt and came to show me. When I told her she looked beautiful, she posed and replied, "Yes, I am a beautiful girl!"

What is it worth for a child to know she is beautiful? What does it cost for a heart to know its worth to the One who formed it? What is a life worth to God? And to you? Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10) He died, and most importantly, rose again so that every lost child and every lonely heart could know His abundant Life and live it to the full! Take time to thank Him and to reflect on the new Life He offers. Have you really received His greatest gift? If not, would you receive Him? Lydia can testify to its reality, and so can Jackson.

Eleven-year-old Jackson came to us weighing barely more than 20 kilograms. Due to his family's negligence, he was in stage four of AIDS. He was extremely weak, suffering from TB and pneumonia, vomited most of the food he ate, and struggled for sleep due to nightmares and pain. Urgent requests for prayer went out around the world by email and phone.

Our Own Home

A refuge for orphans living with HIV/AIDS in Jinja, Uganda



God answers prayers! Only a month later, Jackson weighs 27 kilograms, eats like a horse, plays football with the other boys (though he's not quite as fast yet), and wants to try going to school. Things are not yet perfect, but the improvement is astonishing. God's love is the only love that never fails.



"Auntie" Jessica & friends!

It was a joy this month to welcome a good friend who will be staying with us until the end of April! "Auntie Jessica" is a nurse who loves children, and the children love her, too! She has a tender heart and they enjoy her cuddles, and she is also a blast to play with! When she had to administer a few injections, her popularity may have dropped a notch -- but only for a few minutes! :o) Thank you, Auntie Jessica!

Thank you for your love, your prayers, and your support of Our Own Home!
"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him..."
(Romans 15:13)



Jackson in January

Jackson in March

"You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; You encourage them, and You listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more." Psalm 10:17-18



Be blessed,

"Mommy" Holly

We now have enough in our "van fund" to purchase a fifteen-passenger van! God has provided, and we are so grateful to Him and to all of you that He used to take care of this need! Thank you so much!

Please visit our new website at www.africaourownhome.org! Here you'll find an overview of our ministry, lots of pictures, our newsletter archive, volunteer and contact information. Please share and e-mail this link to anyone who might be interested in learning more about Our Own Home!

Thank you!!!! It is your faithful support that makes it possible for children like Lydia and Jackson to receive the medical care, education and, most of all, love that was missing in their lives!

Now that the van has been provided through your generosity, **regular monthly support is our primary need.** 37 children is certainly more than we expected to have this soon, which means that monthly expenses are more than were budgeted. If you are not now a monthly contributor, would you prayerfully consider whether you could become one? Every gift, no matter how small, is making an incredible difference, even saving the lives of some of these children.

If you would like to make a donation, please make checks payable to **Our Own Home** and send to: 1075 Beaumont Dr. Casper, WY 82601. We also accept credit card and Paypal donations at www.africaourownhome.org. Donations are tax deductible as permitted by law.

Please write to me at let_them_come@yahoo.com. I'd LOVE to hear from you!
Our Own Home Ministries International is a 501(c)3 religious charitable organization.