

KITENGEA COMMUNITY LIBRARY

September 2009

Dear Friends:

The big news this year is that the Kitengesa Community Library has moved into a new building! We have been working on the building project since January 2008 when the University of British Columbia gave us the first installment of a grant for building a computer center. Rather than extend our old building, which is on the grounds of Kitengesa Comprehensive Secondary School, we decided to put up a new one with a room for reading, another for computers, and a community hall. The UBC grant was not enough for all this, but many donors have helped, including, and especially, our loyal friends of the UN 1% for Development Fund. We purchased land close to the school, and construction has been going on ever since. Now the reading and computer rooms are complete,

and although the hall has as yet no windows or doors it can be used for meetings. The final installment of the grant arrived in June, enabling us to buy solar panels and other equipment for electricity. We could not afford enough for the whole complex, but the reading and computer rooms are well lit, and we can run three or four laptops; we will add more panels, and computers, as we get the funds. The rooms are bright and wonderfully cool. When I went to see the library in its new space at the end of July, it was full of people, and students were streaming up from the school at lunchtime.

The plan is to make an income for the library by renting out the hall for weddings and such occasions. In July we held a meeting for library members and asked for advice on how to implement this plan. Everyone participated enthusiastically, and all agreed that Charles Ssebwana, a shopkeeper in the trading center and a loyal library member, should make the bookings and receive the deposits.

While the new building has absorbed much of our energy and nearly all our funds, we have still kept up with library activities. I have spent a lot of time there (in the old library building) over the past few months and have been impressed to see how busy the place is—and it is getting busier than ever as volunteers from the University of British Columbia, placed as teachers in the local primary school, are bringing their classes in to read. Dan, our chief librarian, has also been conducting a reading program, Twenty Challenge, in which secondary school

students are “challenged” to read twenty books in a month. The program has been warmly received, and we now know much more about what these students like to read and how they read it. Finally, Goretti Nakyato, a former Library Scholar whose training as a teacher we have been supporting, has now completed her program and returned to work with us. She has been facilitating a Family Literacy project with the Women’s Group (which includes one man and lots of children). We were given course materials by the Family Literacy Project in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and have adapted them for Kitengesa. Among our adaptations has been the inclusion of the “color” books (My Red Book, etc.) produced by Kathy Knowles for the Osu Children’s Libraries in Ghana and generously donated to us by the Osu Children’s Library Fund. The women have translated two of

these books into Luganda, and, among other activities, have produced little books of their own as well. They are tremendously enthusiastic about the project, while Goretti has blossomed with the

responsibility and authority that it has given her.

One piece of sad news is that our first librarian, Lucy Namwanje, was ill at the beginning of this year, and chiefly for health reasons has stopped coming to work regularly at Kitengesa. Several of you gave generously to enable us to give her a good parting gift, and she is most grateful. She told me she would spend the money on buying

chickens so that she can sell their eggs. We are still in touch with her and look forward to having her with us when we have special occasions.

If you did not send us a gift for Lucy, or even if you did, you may want to consider making a contribution to the library itself. We still have to complete the hall and to buy furniture and tents to use with it, and of course we still need to buy books and newspapers and must keep paying Dan and Goretti. We will have a little income this year from an NGO that is renting our old building (see www.afripads.org), and once we have bought the chairs and tents we will be able to rent them out too; but it will still be some time before we are self-sufficient. Self-sufficiency is in sight, though, and we must thank you all for helping us to come this far.

Kate Parry
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Please make checks out to FAVL (Friends of African Village Libraries) and mail them to FAVL, P.O. Box 90533, San Jose, CA 95109-3533. Write “Kitengesa Community Library” on the memo line of the check. Thank you!