

**May 6, 2009**

Dear Friends and Family,

We are safely in Kaswanga after a few very busy days.

We have been delighted to see how well the Living Waters Feeding Center is running.

As we have caught up on the news at the center there are good reports as well as some sad news.

First the good news:

Each day, over 100 orphan children are being fed a substantial and nutritious meal. The staff, under the direction of Julie Ouma, takes their responsibilities very seriously. This is evident in the neat clean appearance of the center and their dedication in preparing adequate delicious meals, provided each day promptly at one o'clock. They have become really competent at using the solar oven and have worked out an efficient process of preparing the next day's meal each afternoon. They are also providing the spiritual influence the children need as they pray before meals, tell a character building story or read a bible passage while the children enjoy their meal. This effort has already borne fruit and we were overjoyed to hear that 16 of the older children have made a decision for Christ and have been baptized.

The children are thriving physically, and academically and spiritually.

Bryan, who comes from a child-headed home of 7 boys, scored the highest among 8th graders in the district and has been awarded a scholarship to Mbita High School, where he is now attending. Another one of the orphans, Oskar, is now in 8th grade and is also at the top of his class. We are filled with joy that the feeding center has had a role in helping these boys do so well.

Each month we are trying to provide new uniforms for 10 students so that over the course of a year, each child will have a new uniform. These are sorely needed and have made a big difference in how the children feel about themselves. For many of them, their school uniform is the only clothing they own, so it wears out quickly. When it's time to wash their uniforms, they have to go down to the lake and then sit there waiting until the clothing dries. We had the honor of presenting this month's uniforms to their recipients on Monday.

Thirteen of the children were able to attend the pathfinder camporee thanks to Margaret's leadership and organization. This is something that would have been out of their reach just a few months ago.

Because life is hard here we are bound to have some sad news too:

Our gardener/night watchman, Kennedy and his wife lost their new baby son, Daryl. They believe it was due to malaria which is so prevalent here and the number one killer of children. Please keep Kennedy and his family in your prayers.

Malaria is also a major problem for our children, too. On Monday alone, 5 of them were sent to the Health Center with malaria. We are thankful that they are now under our care and can receive treatment and medication through an arrangement with the Tom Mboya Health Center. We would like to be able to provide bed nets to all of our children soon.

Maureen's leg infection is better after she spent 2 weeks in the hospital earlier this year. However, upon seeing her, it is clear that she still needs continued daily wound care and antibiotics.

There is a serious drought here that has affected everyone. The cost of the beans and maize that are staples has tripled, making it harder to stretch the food budget.

This makes the garden expansion even more imperative. We were surprised to see a few children from the Wanyama Primary School at the feeding center, since they have a 2 mile walk to the center and 2 miles back to school. When we inquired why they would walk that far, we were told that even if they live with a grandparent, the grandparent doesn't have enough food to feed them and the children know that they are sure of a meal if they come to the feeding center.

Six of us went to Kisii yesterday to purchase supplies for the garden project. It was quite an adventure as we traveled home with the truck carrying the huge water tanks and other supplies. The load on top of the truck was about 20 feet high and we were quite an attraction in the towns we passed thru. The height of the load posed quite a problem when we had to pass under many low hanging electrical lines. We prayed, held our breath and gasped more than once as we watched from behind in our van. A few times the lines brushed the tanks and once we saw sparks from an obviously live wire as it touched the tank. We were relieved when we reached the outlying towns and rural areas where there were no electrical lines. The truck arrived safely in Mbita at midnight but could go no farther because the lines were so low there was no way to proceed. So the men waiting in Kaswanga came into town and lifted the tank down and there it sat all night in front of the bank. As I write this, I am trusting that the tank successfully arrived at the feeding center.

Daryl was coordinating all of this late night work while I was sleeping, exhausted, in our room. He arrived back at ICIPE at 3:30 am. Needless to say, I am rested and he is not. So please pray that he stays healthy while we are here.

Water continues to be a challenge with the windmill needing more maintenance. Samson will come from Thika this week to get it up and running. In the meantime we are thankful for the rainwater system set up last year. They've had good rain in the last week which has filled up

the 10,000 litre tank so the feeding center has good water for now.

Thank you all for your prayers and support. I'll try to send another update soon.

Love and prayers, Daryl and Mary Jo Oft, Living Waters International