



**STARCROSS**  
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# Sharings

Winter 2010

## SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE IN TROUBLING TIMES

At Starcross we had day-after-day of torrential rain storms with winds up to 75 miles an hour. There was nothing I could do about it and there was certainly a sense of futility and depression. But, once the greenhouse roof was repaired, I could go there and plant seeds. The wild tempests could not be restrained but I held something of the future in my hand, a tiny tomato seed, and I knew that those hellish storms would not prevail against the promise of a long and delicious summer.

At the same time Sister Julie, dry and hot in Uganda, was on her yearly trip to the Starcross Kin World (SKW) program for AIDS orphans. 12 years ago when she and Starcross friends started, no one could expect to hold back the tide of misery and devastation from the AIDS pandemic in Africa. But SKW did exactly what I did in the greenhouse. Seeds for the future were planted and this year Sister Julie saw some of the remarkable fruit of those efforts. A few of the stories are on page 3 and 4 and a visual report will soon appear on the website.

There was nothing the people in Port-au-Prince could do to stop the earthquake. Nor is there much my neighbors without adequate funds and employment can do about the recession in America. Most of us have friends and family who are facing medical challenges that leave in doubt if they will be present at the next family milestone.

People of my parent's generation, coming out of the Great Depression and living between two World Wars were want to say about catastrophic events, "These things happen." Or, as a young Haitian who suffered great loss is reported to have said, "That is life — it lasts only a little time."

Bad, horrific, times do happen. We can't hold them back but we can plant the seeds of the future. In fact, I think that is the sacred therapy for surviving catastrophes. Etty Hillesum, in the year she was murdered at Auschwitz, reminded us,

"And, if we just care enough, God is in safe hands with us, despite everything..."

A dear friend on being diagnosed with a fatal illness, went directly home and helped her granddaughter with her homework. No matter what the disaster, God is in safe hands with us if we just care enough for each other.

*Brother Toby*



### ***Sister Marti:* HOW ARE WE DOING?**

We received a donation a few days ago with a note that they were sorry our contributions must be suffering from the horrific disaster in Haiti. We hadn't thought of that. If so, that is something we just have to accept. Certainly there seem to be more needs and less money in everyone's lives.

Yes, of course our contributions are down; the choices are harder right now. Our primary support is the sale of Christmas wreaths, olive oil and dried fruit. This year our sales were down, we expected that, and we were touched by how many people continued to support us, even in difficult times. Thank you, we are truly grateful. We also got notes from some people who were unable to purchase gifts this season, but sent us their best wishes. It made us feel part of the love that seems to come in hard times, when people reach out to each other.

So, we feel blessed in our friends and supporters. Thank you for choosing to support us, when you have a choice.

### **WE MUST NOT LOSE OUR CONNECTION!**

For many years our newsletter, *Sharings*, has been the life-line between Starcross and our friends. We are trying to balance the needs of those who do not have access to the internet and problems we are facing because of the increasing cost of mailing print copies, and growing concern for saving our planet's trees. If it works for you,

*PLEASE SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS SO WE CAN SEND THE NEWSLETTER THAT WAY.*

How? Simply send an email to [community@starcross.org](mailto:community@starcross.org), put "use email" in the subject line, give us your name and you are all set to receive digital *Sharings*, and a few special features available only to those on the list. Be sure and add Starcross to your list of approved friends, or senders, so that we do not end up in your spam filter.

This is personal between us. We never give out our list — never. Thanks.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS @ STARCROSS**

**Wed. March 31st** — *Contemplative Hour* 3 pm (Holy Week)  
**Sat. May 1<sup>st</sup>** — *Gardening Work Day* 10:00 am—3:00 pm

Please contact Sister Julie (phone 707-886-1919 or email [sj@starcross.org](mailto:sj@starcross.org)) If you would like to come or for more information.

*This is an excerpt from Sandra Bodley's, report to her fellow sponsors of Starcross Kin Worldwide (SKW) on her experience with Sister Julie in January. Sandra is Emeritus Professor of Nursing Education, Sonoma State University, and a member of the board of SKW.*

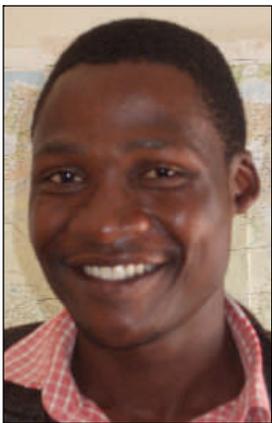
As I listened to these marvelous children, who had lost their parents to AIDS, I kept thinking, "Here are the future leaders of Uganda," the doctors, nurses, teachers, journalists, seamstresses, mechanics, and hair dressers. They would have an education that would provide them with the means to become a contributing member of their society. SKW accepts children of all abilities. Some have a limited capacity for academics, but will learn a trade or skill to support themselves and their future family. Some of the youngsters are very capable, and are encouraged to develop their talents, even to the university level. One of the unique features of the SKW program is that they accept children of any religious denomination and support the children in their respective belief systems and simply want them to become productive citizens of their country... The relationship among the children is exceptional. All are treated as brothers and sisters. There is a playfulness among the children and a spirit of caring for one another in this special family. I felt privileged to be included in this family's home... I have never experienced such genuine, sincere lived gratitude as I saw in the students in the House of Hope. I am so proud of what Sister Julie and SKW are doing in Uganda, it is so in keeping with the spirit of the Starcross Community...the acceptance and support that is given to these youngsters with only the reward of seeing these students become successful in life. I think Sister Julie is seeing the results of her efforts as more of the older students graduate and take their place in life and still choose to stay connected to the children at the House of Hope.

## *Sister Julie:* HOUSE OF HOPE 2010

Going to Uganda each January is one of my favorite duties. It is visiting family. In 1998 we responded to a simple appeal to help some village kids whose parents had died of AIDS. The pandemic had wiped out a generation of adults, leaving their children to be raised by elderly grandparents. Our response was simple and direct – find sponsors in the USA willing to lend a hand. Eventually *STARCROSS KIN WORLDWIDE* (SKW) was incorporated as a separate 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation with a board of sponsors. To date, over 140 AIDS orphans in Uganda have been helped.

I am happy to answer questions or to tell you how to become part of the story. Please contact me - (707) 886-1919 or [sj@starcross.org](mailto:sj@starcross.org).

At my age, most people are bragging about their grandchildren. I have 140. I am so proud of these confident, articulate young professionals. There are mechanics, nurses, computer scientists, tailors, business owners, artists, teachers, receptionists and journalists. Every person has a story. Here are a few of them.



**ALEX - social worker.** He keeps the laughter going in any group. But behind the big grin, there's a young man with wisdom, compassion and a vision. Alex will focus his skills on rural development. As he sees it, Ugandans feel poor but are rich in land and a labor force that can be organized to provide a better life. He has ideas to improve life in his home district by obtaining seeds and educating the locals on better agricultural practices. He is teaching widows to make candles. They will expand to produce envelopes, paper bags and useful items, which can be made at home, sold cheaply and require no investment in machinery or inventory. Alex has the people skills to make all this happen. Alex came to us 12 years ago as a destitute orphan. In the future, Alex would like to become a district Member of Parliament.

**TEDDY - journalist** and our Assistant Director at the House of Hope. She has just graduated from the



most prestigious university in East Africa. She hopes to go into broadcasting or public relations. Before the graduation ceremony Teddy was emotional remembering how she'd come from such a poor family. When she was first sponsored, her ailing father told her not to disappoint us. She has not! Despite the heat, Teddy wore her cap and gown all day at the House of Hope. She wanted the young children to see her and realize that this would be possible for them, too.



**GEORGE - builder.** Sometimes they surprise you. George seemed an unremarkable little boy. His background was typical - a poor orphan living with grandmother in a fishing village on Lake Victoria. He was part of a gaggle of skinny youngsters barely making it through the local primary school. He never had much to say when I visited.

George struggled with academics in high school. In his third year he and we decided it would be best for him to go directly into a trade. He transferred to a vocational program for construction training. We gave George some tools when he graduated. I barely recognized the strong, self-assured man at our reunion party. Now in his mid-twenties, George is part of a successful building cooperative called *Step-by-Step Builders*. They work all over Kampala. George often stops by the House of Hope bringing fresh bread or treats for the children. They are very fond of him. And they speak of George as an example. He has shown them that a university education is not the only path to success in life.

**HARRIET - interpreter.** Harriet already has a busy career as a sign language interpreter. From an early age, Harriet felt a calling to help handicapped people. She did her homework and figured out where the needs were greatest and where she would be able to support herself while making a needed

*(Continued on back page)*

# STARCROSS

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## WINTER NEWSLETTER 2010

### In One Hut – Heartbreak and Hope



Nothing could have prepared me for what I encountered while visiting one of our newer children. Sandra is from a poor fishing village on Lake Victoria where she lives with her grandmother and an older sister who is mentally retarded. She joined our project 2 years ago. Sandra, age 14, has just completed primary school. Her good grades mean that she will move to Kampala and attend a boarding school when the new term begins. Sandra's a bright, affectionate girl, very eager to learn.

As I was congratulating Sandra on her excellent school test results I noticed her grandmother beside

the hut holding a whimpering infant. Sandra's sister with the mental age of a toddler had been raped and had given birth. The 8 month old boy was obviously malnourished and severely retarded. His eyes did not track. His hair and skin were sallow. The birth mother had not been capable of nursing and the grandmother had no money for milk.

Starcross Kin Worldwide will provide the funds for nourishing this poor child and obtaining medical care. Although his life will probably be short, his grandmother will have the means to care for him and his mother as well as she can. And, there is every reason to believe that young Sandra, in the future, will be willing and able to help her family and many others in her country.



Sandra—our hope

(Continued from page 3)



contribution. That was among the deaf. Harriet's university advisor was a deaf/mute professor. Harriet loves her work.

As our students graduate, find employment and leave the program, new orphans are taken in. I love to watch the process unfold. A needy child, often malnourished and frightened, begins to have enough food and a chance to go to school. You can see the sparks of hope return.

In 2010 Starcross Kin Worldwide will take in 20 new young children from very desperate backgrounds.

