

27th May 2016

An update on our students and particularly for those who sponsor these wonderful young people and giving them this fantastic opportunity to get an education.

Following my recent return from Uganda there has been a lot's going on as I found out on my latest visit. I was around for the first of the student's meetings which our new Manager, Malisa Enos, organised. The term has been a very odd one as schools were closed during the elections so the whole term was disorganised. The holidays were staggered as a consequence so at no point did we get the entire students home together. As a result I have come home with some reports and letters and the rest will follow after the meeting on in early June.

The new manager is very good. He is supportive and caring with the students, consults with the parents during home visits and with the schools and is increasing the regular involvement of the students as part of the 'AVS family'. Quite rightly, he wants them to reflect on their fortunate position of being sponsored through their education. His programme includes inviting a range of speakers to talk to the girls and boys on relevant topics such as career guidance and health issues, involving them in sports activities and in 'giving back' to the community. We are starting a homework club at the centre to help them. Those who are still studying from home come to the Centre over the weekend to join in the activities which are laid on. Those who are away at colleges and universities are asked to participate during their vacation and to spend time with the younger students.

A number of past students were able to come to the meeting and it was a joy to see some whom I haven't seen for a few years now. Wasukira Anthony comes immediately to mind; He is over six foot, tall and strong. He has joined the UDFP (Ugandan army) using his qualifications as a Clinical Medical Officer. He heads up a health centre in the north of our area. Always a shy boy with a significant stammer he now has this almost completely under control and is the co-ordinator for our Alumni Association. All of this in spite of the fact that because of a 'hopeless' dad, he is now responsible for three younger brothers.

Together at the meeting, the nurses, teachers, caterers and midwives, decided that they want to give the same chance that they had to other young people who are in a similar position to the one which in they were in some years ago. The same message was heard again and again 'where would we be if AVS hadn't helped us?' So it is their decision that each one of them will commit (depending on their situations) to donating a monthly sum of money to the AVS savings account. This is to be used to help AVS Uganda to continue to help other needy students. It's amazing! Savings account set up and agreements being made. What an example for our current students. What a joy it was to be with them and to recognise again how AVS has changed their lives. Just one of them didn't have a job and honestly it is because he lost his way.

In the centre itself we have one past student working as a volunteer setting up the library, another, who is waiting for her results, is acting as receptionist, another is advising on the resources needed before we open our canteen and catering services

and another is teaching in one of our local secondary schools as a Physics teacher. It's a delight to hear the students calling him 'Mr Busiku'! The Parish Chief in our midst, who was an AVS student, is wielding influence for the good in the local community.

Proud doesn't even begin to cover it!

Thank you all for making such a difference. Please don't get tired!

Marie x