

Hi everyone,

I have just created my fundraising page for my Ugandan Adventure in June with my friend Mary Hossack. At the end of May we are jetting off to Uganda to take part in the Uganda Marathon. On 5th June will be running a half marathon which will involve 21km on tricky terrain, under the African sun, at high altitude! We've been training hard since last year, when we both took up running for the first time. I wouldn't say I'm a natural runner....but I'm getting there! Last weekend we raced a 15km run with obstacles in the South Downs in preparation for the hills of Uganda and on 8th May I'll be running in the Hackney Half marathon with Jack. All this will hopefully get my legs ready for Uganda! We're not aiming for a specific time, I've been told this isn't the race for that, just finishing in one piece will be reward enough for us!

We are running in aid of two fantastic charities, which I've outlined a bit about below.

The first charity we are sponsoring is one of the Uganda Marathon charities based in Masaka, where the race is, called East African Playgrounds. Since 2009 they have been building child-centred, creative, inclusive, safe and fun playgrounds that maximise the benefits that children are able to gain from play. As an Early Years teacher, I'm so passionate about the power of play-based learning so this was an obvious choice for us! Please have a look at their website to see the amazing spaces that they have been creating over Uganda for children to play, socialise, relax and have fun over the past 6 years! <http://eastafricanplaygrounds.org/> Here is a link to a lovely Youtube video about their work too: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0nD3vL6UsA>

The second charity was one I learnt about from a friend: African Village Support. This charity was started by Marie Cates in 2003, who I recently had the pleasure of meeting to find out more about the fantastic work of AVS. Based on the other side of the country in Eastern Uganda, Marie and her team have been supporting small villages in Eastern Uganda since 2003. They aim to help improve quality of life of both adults and children in Uganda and are a humanitarian, community based organisation who deliver sustainable projects. It was amazing to learn about their work from Marie, who originally went out to Uganda to live there for a few years with VSO, having retired from her job as a primary

headteacher in the UK. African Village Support have been involved with a wide range of different projects such as supporting women's groups, funding children's education, building a school hostel and a community centre to name a few. When I spoke to Marie, what struck me as vitally important is building an organisation that has a sustainable structure, and this is what AVS is doing. Take some time to look at their website and read their newsletter too. <http://www.africanvillagesupport.org/>

We've set our fundraising target at £4000, which seems like a lot at this stage but we've got quite a few fundraising events lined up in London and down in Somerset where Mary lives. One of our key goals is also to raise awareness of the charities and their projects with our children here in the UK. This term, for example, in my Reception class our topic is Africa and the children are learning what life is like for some of their peers in Uganda. We are going to be doing a mini-marathon event as well as a charity Zumba class. If you could spare any money in donation I would be so grateful. The trip itself is entirely self-funded so all of your money is going directly to the charities. Our fundraising page is <https://mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/torieandmary> and you will see that the charity named on there is the UGM Foundation. That is because all your funds will go into the foundation before being split between the two charities. This is the easiest way to ensure that both causes get an equal share of any money raised. I'm aware that some of you may not have heard of or used the BT MyDonate page before, and may be more familiar with sites such as justgiving. We are using the BT website because they do not take any cut in the money raised, unlike justgiving who take 5%. With small events such as this one, 5% can make a huge difference and we want the money to go where it is most needed!

Thank-you so much for taking the time to read this (rather long) email and hear about our adventure! On the fundraising page I only had 1000 characters to explain about the trip and both charities, which isn't nearly enough, so I have taken that opportunity here! Please do get in touch if you want to find out more about the charities or the race itself. We are in the process of setting up a blog so that you can follow our progress and see how we get on.

Love,

Torie xx