



**During the holiday season, Center for Hospice Care hosted a holiday sale to support PCAU. The sale was open to all CHC staff and volunteers and raised over \$1,050 for their friends at PCAU!**



### Reflections by Roberta Spencer The Year of Traveling “Virtually”

As we all rang in the New Year of 2021, with hopes for a “better year,” I could not but think in any “normal time” I would be preparing for my annual travels to Uganda to assist with the partnership between [Center for Hospice Care](#) (CHC) and the [Palliative Care Association of Uganda](#) (PCAU). A focus of my time is always with the Road to Hope program for child caregivers that PCAU and CHC support. Unfortunately, like everyone else’s best laid plans, the pandemic made that impossible. So, there were no reunions this January with so many wonderful people I have come to know as friends and no opportunity to see the many children I have watched grow up in the Road to Hope program. My visit this year is a virtual one, trying to stay connected with my Ugandan family via email, calls, letters, or an occasional Zoom call. I reflect on all that I miss by not being there.



For those who have had the opportunity to visit Uganda and meet the PCAU staff and the incredible children in the Road to Hope program, you may understand why it is so disappointing not to be able to visit. Uganda is a beautiful country whose people are gracious and welcoming. Nowhere is this better personified than in those who work for PCAU and welcome me so warmly on each visit. To see their smiles and feel their embraces energizes me for the weeks ahead. Over the years, I have developed such an appreciation of their hard work and dedication in bringing services to so many who otherwise would endure suffering. They are truly an inspiration in their compassion and their work, especially during this pandemic when providing services is even more challenging. Their efforts would amaze you!



I miss spending time with Rose, the former PCAU country director, and her family who have become family to me. We would be recounting the success of our partnership and accomplishments of PCAU. I feel badly I cannot sit in on the many meetings with Mark, PCAU’s current country director, and the staff to listen to their plans and aspirations for the year ahead or go on visits to surrounding areas to spread the message of palliative care. Those of you who have traveled the roads in Uganda know that these visits can be long and tiring, but upon returning, you always feel that something positive was accomplished in ways small or large. It is a loss not to hear the stories of “new” friends and to experience all that makes Uganda – and PCAU – special.



Of course, the Road to Hope program is dear to my heart, and if there is one part of my journey that I truly looked forward to each year – and greatly miss this year – it is seeing the many children served by the program and to hear their many collective experiences as they grow up. I am always amazed from year to year how much they grow, mature, and while many face challenges that are not easily resolved, they continue to inspire through their perseverance, achievements, and gratitude for those who have helped them, especially their U.S. sponsors. Over the years my visits coincided with the Children’s Camp for all the children or the Empowerment Retreat for the older children. These camps offer support and validation for the children. They are encouraged in ways of leadership and to keep their dreams alive for a better life ahead. How I miss the privilege to be part of their discussions, to laugh with them and at times, to cry with them.



I could pause and reflect on so many amazing, sometimes unbelievable, aspects of their lives. For me to single out any would not respect the stories of all. What I can say from my “virtual travels” is that they have all “stepped up” during this pandemic. Keeping up with any kind of studies with little to no resources has been a challenge but has, in some way, continued. Most children have tutors which were funded by their sponsorships, and they are also taking initiative to study on their own. Several of the older children borrowed money from an entrepreneurship fund managed by PCAU to start small income-generating projects to help put food on the table at home. Gardens were planted, chickens and pigs are being raised, and one of the older students sought out a mentor in tailoring. With basic skills he now sews masks to sell. I know much more is probably going on!

If I could come up with one word for these children and young adults, it is **RESILIENCE!** How blessed I am to know them, to learn from them, to be trusted by them, to love them... and for my husband and I to support two beautiful young women with a bright future. So while I cannot visit this year, I am there virtually as much as I can be, and I am there in spirit and heart. Like everyone, I remain hopeful this pandemic will soon be behind us. When it is, the opportunity to visit once again will be a reality and I will be delighted to tell you about it then!

**Read more about Roberta’s past visits to Uganda [here](#).**

### Volunteer Spotlight: Roberta Spencer

In 2008, when Center for Hospice Care (CHC) entered into partnership with the Palliative Care Association of Uganda (PCAU), Roberta Spencer (who is also a former CHC employee) was at the lead. Roberta was involved in the initial communications with Rose Kiwanuka, then PCAU’s country director. CHC was eager to understand what it meant to partner with the national association. PCAU represents palliative care organizations, care providers, and palliative care professionals throughout Uganda with the goal to make palliative care accessible to all in need. In March 2009, Roberta and another CHC staff member took a fact-finding trip to Uganda to meet with Rose and the PCAU team.

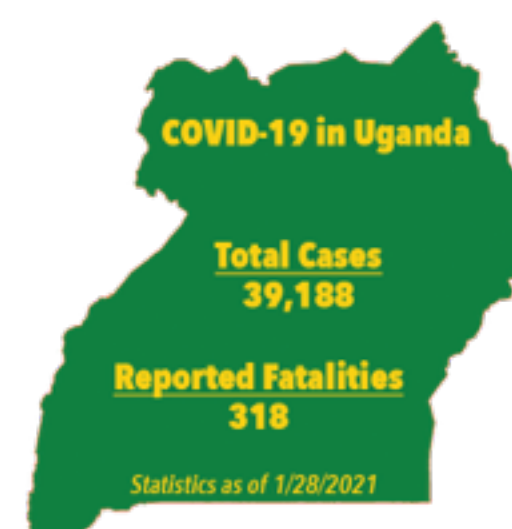


Their relationship deepened and allowed CHC to gain insight into and appreciation for PCAU’s important work. Accompanied by Rose, Roberta traversed the country of Uganda engaging in palliative care advocacy, training and home care visits. This initial visit to PCAU helped identify goals for the CHC/PCAU partnership and established the foundation for the current strong partnership between the organizations.

Now retired, Roberta remains committed to PCAU’s mission and the goals of the partnership as a volunteer. She continues to appreciate the beauty of the people and the land and frequently returns to Uganda to visit her friend, Rose and continue to support PCAU/CHC partnership activities. In 2017, her husband Tom was able to travel with her to Uganda and share the experience. Roberta’s commitment to palliative care in Uganda is unparalleled and we are privileged that she remains part of our team.

### Support for the RTH Program

Please help us support PCAU and the RTH children as they navigate the challenges of the pandemic. You may make an [online](#) donation or send a check to the address below. For more details about the Road to Hope program, please contact Lacey Ahern, international programs manager at [ahernL@cfcare.org](mailto:ahernL@cfcare.org) or 574.367.2455.



For the latest information on Uganda Ministry of Health COVID-19 updates [click here](#).



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