

PCAU PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

Excitedly (and Anxiously) Returning to My Second Home

Excerpts from Roberta Spencer's emails detailing her return trip to Uganda

My journey began early yesterday morning (Sunday, January 22) from South Bend to Atlanta where I had a long layover, but here I am on Monday morning in Amsterdam. This layover is only 4 hours, and I will be on my way to what I consider my second home. I am apprehensive – wanting to remain strong, healthy and productive – but I am excited. I have this wonderful opportunity to be traveling to Uganda for a visit, thanks to the partnership between Center for Hospice Care in South Bend and the Palliative Care Association of Uganda. I am honored and thankful!

Upon arrival in Uganda, some things have changed since my last visit – the airport seemed more efficient, there is more development of businesses and a new highway not far from the village where I stay which makes some connections easier and faster (and when I say "faster," you have to have experienced any traffic jam in Uganda to understand that's relative). Turning into where I stay in the village, the dirt roads have NOT changed. Traveling off a main road into the villages is a challenge. To put it simply, any travel validates the need for a strong car and a safe driver, because any turn can be met with a challenge! It was good to see Jaffer, the PCAU driver. He has the greatest smile, a lot of patience, and my husband, Tom, credits Jaffer for keeping me safe in the Ugandan traffic!



Greeting at the airport

The timing of this visit brings me to Uganda to participate in the children's camp for those on the Road to Hope Program. It is sometimes hard to call them "children" because so many have grown into young adults, but to me, they are "children." I have seen them grow up and have grown to love them all, despite some of their setbacks along the way. I wish you could all meet them. They have such hopes and dreams for themselves – to have a better life and to make a positive difference in Uganda.



George at the Children's Camp with Anita from PCAU

On my first full day in Uganda – and to my great surprise – I got to see George at Rose's home! Rose is the former Country Director for PCAU – the person I worked closely with from the beginning of the partnership. Now those of you who have followed my Ugandan journeys over the years will certainly remember George. He was the first child in the Road to Hope program and you are also well-aware of his struggles over the years with staying in school and being settled in one spot – to put it mildly! Somehow, he always surfaced and returned to the program and school. He is so grown up. There is something special about George that never changes, but he looks and sounds settled. He is in vocational school studying construction. He likes working with his hands and likes the program. He is completing a brief internship and will take classes again when school starts up. He always considered Rose a "mother figure" and likes to come to spend time with her here in the village when he can.

Today was a meeting for the PCAU branch leaders from across all of Uganda. It was well attended considering how far participants have to travel. It always amazes me and reminds me of their dedication and commitment to palliative care. The PCAU staff spoke to the five areas of their new strategic plan: capacity building, advocacy and awareness creation, palliative care research and information, governance and support functions, and sustainability and financial efficiency. A lot for a small staff. The meeting was designed to appeal and empower the branch leaders to "be" PCAU to their areas. They must be the direct representatives of PCAU. The staff of PCAU can no longer be everywhere in Uganda as much as they have been in the past due to efficient use of time, money and staff. You can "feel" the high energy level these individuals have for palliative care. PCAU needs them for continued growth and success. The participants met in small groups and then shared how we can all unite for the same purpose – the spread of palliative care for all of Uganda!"



Photos from the meeting of PCAU branch leaders

Roberta had a busy first week! At PCAU's request, she also met with a group of spiritual leaders to talk about spiritual care in hospice and palliative care. This is an emerging priority for PCAU and with Roberta's help, our team at CHC/HF is determining how we might best support this effort. She was able to connect with former Notre Dame MS student, Katie Anderson, who interned with PCAU in 2016. As a result of her internship, she eventually sold her home and moved to Uganda. Katie is an RN working in emergency care and education. Roberta attended a meeting of newly formed support group for survivors of childhood cancer who have a disability, and she spoke at the conclusion of a three-day training on community-based palliative care. She was also able to see Stephen's clinic. Stephen (a former Road to Hope student) will graduate from medical school in March.

"It is small and simple, but he is so proud of it. The clinic is close to where he grew up caring for his mother. I will send pictures of Stephen in his doctor's coat with his name, Doctor Stephen Kasula. He beams when he talks about his RTH sponsors and is so appreciative for the opportunity to give back to his village, community and the RTH program through medical services."

In our next newsletter, we will share more on the RTH children's camp and Roberta's reflections on how the children have grown and matured.



Do you know someone who might enjoy reading about this partnership and palliative care in Uganda?

Help us spread the word and forward this email to your friends and colleagues. Thank you!

DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT to help us reach the last mile in Uganda!

PCAU's current 2010 Toyota Landcruiser has now traveled over 270,000 km (almost 170,000 miles) and is on its last leg. PCAU is in critical need of a new vehicle that will allow them to continue traveling across the country to bring access to palliative care to all in Uganda. Our goal is to raise \$85,000 for this. Crisscrossing Uganda to support hospices, transport Road to Hope children to school and attending government meetings are all central to PCAU's work toward making palliative care available for all in Uganda.

We have currently reached 78% of our goal! **Your donation today will be matched dollar for dollar until we reach 100% of our goal.**

All donations to this fund go directly toward the purchase of a new vehicle for PCAU. Double your impact and give today!



Donate to the PCAU Vehicle Fund



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