

The Resilient Class of 2024

The students graduating from 6th grade at Community Charity School (CCS) have come a very long way. Growing up in extreme poverty, these orphans have seen it all; their school years have been filled with political violence & world-wide health crises.

As toddlers their area was hard hit by Ebola (& CCS found a creative way to wash hands with no running water). Part way through their 1st grade, school was closed by COVID, yet their teachers risked their own lives to bring masks & instruction to the children at home. Afterwards, many of their classmates did not return to school as their families struggled to survive.



In their 2nd grade year, nearby volcano Mt. Nyiragongo erupted, sending lava all over. Thousands fled to any place they could find refuge; some camped in the CCS school building & survived by using its walls & benches for firewood. When finally

CCS could return, the kids helped volunteers make repairs. After doubling up classes for 6 months during rebuilding, they once again had their own rooms.

Their school years have been replete with social unrest & violence. Since last year Goma has been surrounded by M23 militia, soon followed by thousands



of refugees. (See recent newsletters.) Goma is overcrowded & many are starving in the streets. These kids have come

to school hungry & frightened by the sound of gunfire day & night... but they have come!

**Congratulations to
17 amazingly resilient kids!**

Volunteer Revitalization of CCS

The CCS building in Goma has suffered years of vandalism & benign neglect due to lack of funding. There has been increasing concern about security because of the need to house valuable equipment, including a small computer lab & a sewing instruction area which belongs to Club Rafiki. (See newsletters summer 2023, June 2024.)



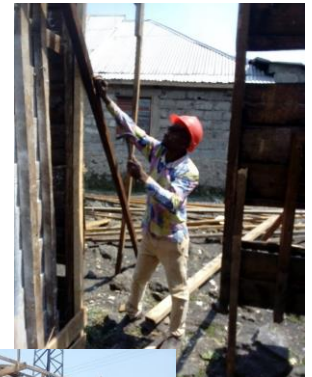
So Principal Mulamba called together the CCS community & 98 families joined in fundraising, going into the city & churches to ask for support. The people of Goma have been struggling to survive but they view these new programs as an investment in the future of their community. Most donations were probably

about 10 cents. This was used to buy lumber, roofing, nails. Several refugees, members of Club Rafiki, were involved in the fundraising & are working side by side with the host-families of the students at CCS.

Above: a refugee pauses to survey the progress.

Right: construction volunteer removes damaged boards from the outside of a classroom.

Below: volunteers construct scaffolding to rebuild the roof.



Hurrah,
CCS!!

Congrats
to all the
volunteers!

Building Back, Season Two

Last year generous friends at Princeton United Methodist led by Ms. Jie Hayes partnered with our friends in villages near Uvira to help the community build houses for their members whose homes had washed away in Jan. 2022.



Villagers provided labor & materials at hand, such as stones & sundried bricks, American

donations bought cement, nails, roofing, windows & doors; twenty of the 143 households which lost everything moved into their new homes in Sept. 2023.



We are so grateful that Ms. Hayes & PUMC volunteered to support 20 more houses this year! The first step is



for the women to seek out stones for the foundation, carrying them on their heads. Men help mix cement, lay foundations, & make sundried bricks.

Stay tuned for success!

FRIENDS Around the WORLD

Beautiful surprises come from so many places! We are thrilled to introduce one of the new friends who bring us such encouragement along with their generous gifts. We thank her for giving us permission to share her name & support.

Ms. Mia Wettstein in

Melbourne, Australia writes:

"I am so so so glad I could do something to help, and there is so much more that I do want to do. I found out about your site (not little!! you guys are amazing) on Tiktok! I looked into it, and decided to trust your site out of the others. The cause and effect, information and stories you shared drew me to you. I have such admiration for what you do."

Thank you so much, Mia!!

Good News for Graduates!

Each year FEBA works to assist secondary school students complete their formal education (about A.A. degree level). The final step is writing a long paper & taking a state exam – both of which cost money, for typing the paper & registering for the exam. The fruit is a state diploma, the recognized measure of being well educated.



This year among the 18 students was Papy Santu, a young man whom Maman Monique had helped with school fees when he was a child refugee many years ago. Papy was working as a motor bike "taxi" to buy food when a friend (also hungry) asked to borrow the bike for an afternoon... & had an accident. The owner of the bike put Papy in prison until he could pay for it; some of Maman Monique's American friends bought a new bike & she got him out of prison, in very poor health. He had to go immediately to take his state exam, but the results never came back. He has been studying on his own & now he has passed the exam! Congratulations, Papy!

(PS Papy is a talented musician & has his own band, which played at the Women's Center inauguration last July. See a video on our Tiktok site!)

MORE WONDERFUL VOLUNTEERS

Last month we happily welcomed Riannon Zorn & Maren Sonstegard-Spray in social media. Now we are excited to present five more of our wonderful volunteers. Hands Across the Water (HAW), our youth division, has been a great source of talent. Students from the original club at Community Middle School have returned to be "willing hands." They got into the act at the last gala; what lively & helpful assistants!

Introducing (alphabetical order of last names):

Aayushi Agrahari

Nikita Goyal

Ayushi Kagarana,

Ananya Lai

Sahana Rajamaniskam