imbabazi
A HOME FOR HOPE

Imbabazi Insider

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Reunification in Rwanda**
- **Christmas 2012 highlights**
- **Imbabazi "pays it forward"**

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Reunification in Rwanda

In 2012, the Rwandan government developed a plan to reunify orphans with families in the community rather than keeping them in residential institutions. Implementation of this plan began last year and the Ministry of Gender and Promotion of Family (MIGEPROF) has been working closely with orphanages to ensure compliance and help locate suitable family environments. Imbabazi has been praised for its outstanding work during this process, as our staff are 100% dedicated to ensuring the wellbeing and bright futures of our children.

Fortunately most children at Imbabazi are being placed with distant relatives with whom they already have long-standing relationships. For those without known family ties, Imbabazi staff has worked tirelessly over the last few months to locate family members or, in a few cases, to find surrogate families in the community who are willing and able to take in one of our children. Our reunification advisors visit families before and during the reunification process to ensure that living conditions are safe and satisfactory, and in several cases we have provided funding for small home repairs and improvements. We will continue to conduct visitations to all children in order to ensure that they and their new family are adjusting well; please be assured that we **only** place children in secure and loving environments. In addition, **Imbabazi will continue to financially support the education and personal needs of reunified children and provide a stipend to families to assist with their care.** (cont'd on page 2)

Familiar Faces @ Imbabazi

As you will read about in this issue of the Insider, we've been undergoing a lot of transition here at Imbabazi — not only with our children but also our staff! After completing two years of Peace Corps service as a volunteer at Imbabazi last November, Ashley went home to California for four months before returning to Imbabazi on April 1st. She will be assuming the position of acting Executive Director for the time being and can be reached at ashley@imbabazi.org. Ashley is excited to be with us during this time of transition as we begin to work more closely with the surrounding community to develop capacity and resources – for more information, see the above article on Reunification in Rwanda.

Our former Executive Director, Devon Kuntzman, had to unexpectedly return to America in December but is still working closely with Imbabazi from her office stateside; she can still be reached at devon@imbabazi.org. Our tourism and volunteer coordinator, Valerie van Wassenaer, completed her contract with Imbabazi in February and returned home to Canada to spend some time with family. We thank her for her hard work over the last year and a half and wish her the best of luck in her next adventure!

Reunification (cont'd)

"Our founder Roz Carr established the orphanage in 1994 with the desire to give children in Rwanda a better life, and we intend on continuing that mission well into the future."

It was with mixed emotions that we embarked on this reunification journey – although we are sad to see the children leave the orphanage and had some initial doubts about the process, we have so far been amazed with the positive results! Reunification has allowed children to be more in touch with their roots, their communities and their culture. In addition, being in a home environment has given them more time focus to on important things like studying and helping their families.

Take one of our youngest children, Tuyisenge Janvier. Tuyisenge was reunified with his aunt and uncle earlier this year along with brothers Mbarusha Samuel and Iyakaremye Justin. While at Imbabazi, he struggled in school and was barely passing most subjects. Since being reunified, Tuyisenge is now the top student in his P3 class!

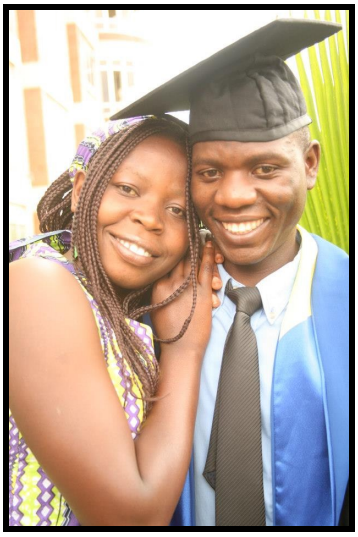
There is also Nsenga Jean Baptiste, who has always been a brilliant student but was often reluctant to do his chores around the orphanage. Since being reunified with his aunt in February, she reports to us that Nsenga has been instrumental in helping with their family potato business this season.

Many of you have been asking us what will become of Imbabazi once all the children have left. We are happy to say that although our residential orphanage facility is coming to an end, it is not the end for Imbabazi! On the contrary, 2013 will be a brand new chapter for Imbabazi full of promise and exciting new projects. **Our founder Roz Carr established the orphanage in 1994 with the desire to give children in Rwanda a better life, and we intend on continuing that mission well into the future.** To that end, we will be undergoing a transition over the next few months from orphanage to community learning center. By opening Imbabazi up to the community and making our educational resources available to them, children and young people in the area will benefit immensely. Some ideas we have in the works include: English and computer lessons for students; music lessons for students and local church performers; traditional drumming and dance lessons for small children; community library; recreational activities such as movies, arts & crafts and sports teams; nursery/preschool and early childhood development program; and mother/child nutrition classes. We are also expanding our agricultural activities which will mean more jobs for the community, and this summer we will open a museum about the life of Roz Carr.

We hope you will continue to stay in touch and stay involved with Imbabazi as we undergo this exciting transition!

Imbabazi's 1st College Graduate!

This January, the Imbabazi family celebrated a very special milestone: our first university graduate! Dusabimana Jean Bosco completed four years of study at Kigali Institute of Science and Technology and received a Bachelor of Science diploma in Electrical and Electronics Engineering. Upon graduation, Dusabimana completed a three-month internship at Volcanoes Safaris in Kigali. Since then, Volcanoes Safaris has made it possible for Dusabimana to continue his training in electronics and mechanical wiring as an employee at their office in Uganda.



Dusabimana came to Imbabazi along with his younger sister Ingabire Claudia (who is now also a university student at Rwanda Tourism University College) and was a bright and curious child from the start. He was selected as 1 of 20 children from Imbabazi to participate in Through the Eyes of Children, a photography project in which they were provided with photography training and cameras in order to document life in Rwanda "through the eyes of children." Thanks to the generosity of Dusabimana's sponsor he was able to attend university and will no doubt be an inspiration to all Imbabazi students after him! Congratulations Dusabimana!

Christmas 2012 @ Imbabazi

Christmas 2012 was especially poignant at Imbabazi. With the reunification process well underway, Christmas 2012 was likely the last big holiday celebration here at the orphanage. The children will, of course, always be welcome back at Imbabazi (particularly during the holidays), but in the future they will probably want to spend Christmas and birthdays at home with their families. With that in mind, we wanted to make sure that this would be "a Christmas to remember" for all of our kids and staff!

In November, Sue Nelson, her sister and nephew visited Imbabazi for Thanksgiving. Sue was a close friend of Roz Carr and has been coming to Imbabazi for Thanksgiving every year for many many years! She has been an integral part of Imbabazi and a loving and dependable presence in our childrens' lives. During her stay, she and her family and Devon began the process of putting together gifts for all of our children. It was a good head start and certainly alleviated some stress and time closer to the big day! In addition, our Peace Corps Volunteer Ashley prepared gift bags for our 30+ staff members and their families before she left in November. Thanks to all of you for your help!

This past year, an old tradition was revived here at Imbabazi. A traditional dance troupe was put together, training and employing 15 local community members to perform traditional dance, drumming and songs for visitors to Imbabazi. They have worked really hard, taken ownership of the troupe and have become an integral part of our goal of towards financial sustainability. It was therefore only fitting that they also be included in the gifts, which were prepared by Valerie – they were all very surprised, grateful and enthusiastic!

The few days before Christmas were an incredibly busy time for the staff at Imbabazi. The children's gifts had to be

(cont'd on page 4)

Christmas (cont'd)

Our community dance troupe with their Christmas gifts!

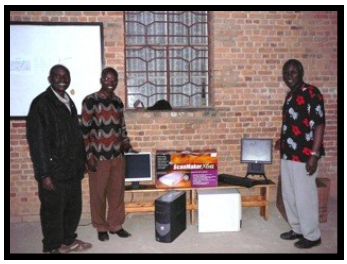
completed, the dining hall needed to be decorated, food needed to be purchased and prepared, etc. As this was potentially the last Christmas to be celebrated at the orphanage, it was decided that the cooking would be done by women from the local community rather than the kids themselves, a break from our normal tradition. This gave the kids and staff more time to socialize and enjoy the full festivities. Over 50 kids were here to celebrate the special day, some of whom were still residing at Imbabazi and some of whom had already been reunified but came back to celebrate. Joseph, a longtime friend of Imbabazi, started the day off with a special sermon, which all the children and staff attended. Gifts were then distributed to everyone present, almost one hundred gift bags in all! Everyone was very excited and happy with all their goodies! The girls all congregated in their dormitory room, tried on their new clothes and posed for pictures! A huge feast was then served and that night, copious amounts of hot chocolate and candies were enjoyed by all! We hope it was a Christmas to remember!

Paying It Forward

Since we began the process of reunification last year, a lot of cleaning, sorting and organizing has been taking place at Imbabazi. We have come across items that are no longer working or useful at the orphanage as well as clothes and toys that are no longer used by or appropriate for our young adults. This was an opportunity for these things, as well as other odds and sods, to be shared with other people and places in need. In essence, Imbabazi had the chance to 'pay it forward'.

Rwankeri School

A number of our children have had the good fortune to attend the esteemed Adventist Secondary School in nearby Rwankeri, a school that is well known for its excellence in academics. One of the programs offered there is computer IT training, but our students informed us they had a lack of practical hands-on training equipment. Imbabazi has been extremely fortunate and blessed over the years to have had computers and related equipment donated to us, and we discovered that we had several items hanging around in storage that were not working, outdated or no longer used. There is not an easy way to dispose of electronic items here in Rwanda, so we contacted the headmaster and proposed that we donate these items to the computer program at the school. Recycle, reduce, reuse! The students can take them apart and learn about the systems and inner workings of these items and also have the chance to try to fix and actually use them! We also gave them some older technological equipment that was still in working order.



Valerie and Phanuel, our cook, brought the equipment to the school and the reception was very favorable! The headmaster, students and teachers gathered round and thanked Imbabazi profusely for their wonderful donation! We are so happy that these items will now be useful in educating IT students.

Noel Orphanage & Ecole d'Art

Just before Christmas, Valerie and Adrien made a trip to nearby Nyundo to drop off donations from Imbabazi for Noel Orphanage and Ecole D'Art (School of Art). We were able to put together several bags full of children's clothing and toys for Noel, an orphanage which still has hundreds of children in its care (many of whom are under the age of 10), so these donations were much needed and very happily received!

Over the years, Imbabazi has often received gifts and donations of school supplies for our kids, including many pens, pencils and erasers. Unfortunately, pencils are not used in the school system here, so we had amassed a huge amount of them in our storage. Ecole D'Art is located right across the street from Noel Orphanage and, like most other schools, is always in need of supplies. Adrien and Valerie surprised some of the teachers there with a huge bag of pencils and erasers, items that are integral to art education and always in demand! They were very excited and happy to receive our/your generous gift!

Second Kicks

In February, Imbabazi hosted a special donation ceremony for local soccer teams in our area. In 2011, previous to her position as Tourism and Volunteer Coordinator at Imbabazi, Valerie van Wassenaer organized a partnership with Second Kicks, a Toronto-based non-profit organization which collects and donates used soccer uniforms and equipment to developing countries. It turned out to be a long and arduous process but, in the end, 13 boxes were received here in Rwanda with the help of Imbabazi. Our own Imbabazi soccer team got first choice of uniforms; the others were then distributed to L'Esperance Orphanage in the South, different teams in our district, and to male staff members and dancers here at Imbabazi.
The ceremony was well-attended and there was a buzz of excitement in the air! All the players immediately donned their new outfits and proudly posed for pictures. A big 'thank you' to Valerie and Second Kicks for their efforts – our recipients look great and these donations have definitely lifted their spirits and pride!

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We now have online donations!

About the Imbabazi

The Imbabazi Orphanage was founded by an American woman, Rosamond (Roz) Carr, at the age of 82 in the wake of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Imbabazi became a symbol of love and safety for lost and orphaned children. Over the past 18 years, more than 400 children have called Imbabazi their home.

Today Imbabazi is much more than an orphanage. Although our children no longer reside at Imbabazi per the countrywide initiative to deinstitutionalize orphans, we continue to support all of their educational and personal expenses and provide financial support to their new families. We are also a working farm that provides jobs to people in the community as well as an historical landmark and tourist destination in Rwanda. As our children gradually embark on adulthood, Imbabazi will expand its community outreach projects as we strive to carry on Roz's vision and legacy. Imbabazi is able to continue to provide hope to children in Rwanda thanks to donations from kind and generous supporters like you.

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Contributions to Imbabazi Orphanage are tax-deductible and can be made through Partners In Conservation, a registered 501(3)(C) organization. Donations can be made online at www.imbabazi.org/donate, or by sending a check payable to "Partners In Conservation" (indicate Imbabazi Orphanage on your check) to:

Partners In Conservation
Columbus Zoo & Aquarium
P.O. Box 400
Powell, OH 43065 USA

We're on the web!
www.imbabazi.org

We Love Our Visitors!

At the end of 2012, we were happy to welcome back one of our beloved volunteers, Shelley Bacon. Shelley first came to Imbabazi in 2011 for two weeks. During that visit, she spent a lot of time working with our older children discussing themes of how to 'give back' and make a difference in one's community. This year Shelley was able to come back to Imbabazi for a week, during which time she continued nurturing the relationships she had made in 2011. Thanks to her and her grandchildren, several stuffed animals and small toys were distributed to the children of all of our workers for Christmas – needless to say, they were overjoyed! Shelley and her church have also raised money to help with special projects at Imbabazi. Thank you Shelley! If you or someone you know is coming to Rwanda and interested in visiting Imbabazi, please contact us!