

## Visiting the “Arise Talents” Orphanage in Uganda



One of the highlights of my trip to Uganda was when our group had the opportunity to spend time at the Arise Talents Orphanage in Jinja, Uganda. The orphanage is run by Lubaale Nabiru who was born and raised in Jinja. As a young boy, his father taught him to paint. He continued to improve as

a painter and began selling his paintings as a way to raise money for his education. After completing college, he returned to Jinja intent on opening an orphanage where he could teach the children to paint, thus providing them with a means to pay for their education. Parents in Uganda often cannot

afford to send their children to school, so this wonderful man gives these underprivileged children an opportunity for an education. As our bus pulled into the orphanage, it was immediately surrounded by children who couldn't wait to hug us. We were only able to spend about two hours at the orphanage, but while we were there, the children sang for us. During their songs they each introduced themselves and shared what they would like to become after they graduate. They also gave us a tour of their classrooms and sleeping quarters. The most special part of our visit was having the opportunity to purchase the paintings that the kids had created. A \$50 painting covered the cost for one semester of school. This is how I met my buddy Samuel (pictured to the left), the 12 year old boy who painted the drawing that I purchased. I still can't believe how talented these children are! Needless to say, most of us left the orphanage with at least one drawing, others left with two or three. Before leaving, we gathered together to pray for the children and the orphanage as a whole. Although I have now returned to the states, it was a blessing to help provide an education for children like Samuel at the orphanage.

## Speaking Their Language

As you might have assumed, English is not the primary language spoken in Uganda. The most commonly spoken language is Swahili. However, English is taught in the schools and as result most of the children were able to communicate with us effectively. The older generation, on the other hand, typically doesn't speak or understand much English. Since a large number of clinic patients were older adults, this could have been a tremendous barrier for our team. Fortunately, we were blessed with an incredible group of translators. The two translators that I got to know best were Lawrence (left) and Gerald (right). It didn't take long to become friends with them. I enjoyed eating with them and learning about their lives, their interests, and the issues facing the people of Uganda. As we compared the differences between the United States and Uganda, I asked why they had not left the poverty of Uganda to pursue the American dream. Gerald said he believes the only way that conditions in Uganda can improve is if the good people in Uganda stay in the country and do what they can to make it a better place. Although difficult to accept, I could not disagree with his thought process. For 6 to 8 hours of each clinic day,

Lawrence and Gerald translated medication instructions, questions, and diagnosis details to hundreds of patients. Then before the patients left our clinic, they translated our prayers as we prayed for their health, their families, their finances, and other burdens.

Lawrence and Gerald, along with the other translators, worked tirelessly each day to help us provide the best physical and spiritual care possible to over 800 patients. I am incredibly grateful for their willingness to help our team and for their kindness during our trip.





## Patient Spotlight

During our last clinic day, I thought it would be neat to conduct mini interviews with some of the patients as they waited to receive their medications. One of the patients who was willing to speak to me was Margaret, a 39 year old woman from Uganda. After introducing myself, she began to tell me about the farm she works on and then she shared a bit about her 8 children. I do not have children of my own, but I imagine it is extremely difficult to raise 8 children in the United States much less in Uganda! I don't know how she does it, but it was apparent that through the struggle of daily life she was doing the best that she could to provide for her kids. Margaret



had come to the clinic because she wasn't feeling well. After conducting a blood test, she was diagnosed with malaria. Thankfully we had brought plenty of Coratem® to help treat her malaria. After counseling her on the medication, I asked her if she had any prayer requests. She asked that I pray for her health and that God would provide for the needs of her family. With the help of a translator we prayed together. Looking back at our encounter I am still amazed at the joy she had despite the circumstances in her life. Although it had been a long and challenging day for me, Margaret's smile made it worth every moment.

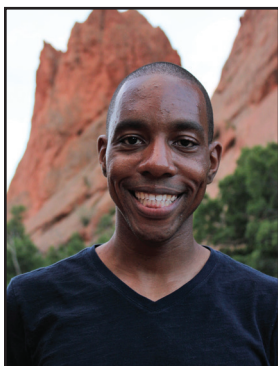
## Reflection

Like many others before me, I left for this mission trip to Uganda having endured some difficulties in my own personal life. It has become somewhat cliché that while on a mission trip, people often experience a moment when they realize that their problems pale in comparison to the needs of the people they are serving. Others come to the realization that they could easily have been born into poverty instead of the family that God chose to place them in. While this is all certainly true, what often fails to be mentioned is this: upon your return home, those personal difficulties could still be looming large in your own life. This was the case for me. However, one of many things that I took from this trip was the persevering spirit of the Ugandan people. Yes, they were upset that we couldn't see them all during our clinic days. Yes, they were frustrated that there was little hope of their children receiving a useful education. Yes, they were angry that the government seems to care so little for them while the political officials continue to live lavishly. Yet through their trials and struggles, they did their best to keep

a positive attitude, even if their earthly outcome appears to be predetermined. So as I considered their struggle, I was reminded of James 1:12 (KJV) which says "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Although the people of Uganda may never have earthly possessions, they have great faith in the Lord and they will certainly be rewarded when they get to heaven. As I move forward through my own struggles, I seek not only to have the perseverance of the Ugandan people; but more importantly, to



be reminded that the reward for enduring my own life's difficulties might not be obtained during my time on earth... but instead may be rewarded in heaven.



*Jason Bowen was born in New York City, NY. At a young age his family moved to Tampa, Florida where they began attending West Gate Baptist Church. After a Sunday school message in 2000, Jason accepted the Lord as his Savior. He graduated from West Gate Christian School in 2009 and proceeded to obtain a degree in Biomedical Sciences and a minor in Public Health from the University of South Florida in 2014. Jason is the immediate past-President of the PBA student chapter of CPFI. During his term as President, PBA was awarded the 2016-2017 CPFI Student Chapter of the Year Award. His hobbies include playing basketball, bike riding, reading, volunteering and spending time with friends and family. One of his favorite Bible verses is Isaiah 41:10 (KJV) which says, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."*