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RAFIKI FOUNDATION MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER



Michelle and David Graves

PO Box 12714
Kampala, UGANDA
EAST AFRICA

Contact information
Email:
MichelleG@RafikiFoundation.org
DavidGr@RafikiFoundation.org
Missionary #252

***“But if we hope for what we
do not see, we wait for it
with patience” (Romans 8:25).***

Dear friends and mission partners,

As we approach the end of our third full year on the mission field here in Uganda, we give thanks to God for each of you. Your prayers and generous support enable us to continue this work to help people know God and raise their standards of living.

We will be in Houston from December 14 through 23, in New York City from December 24 to 27, and in the Baltimore Washington area from December 27 through January 1. We would love to see as many of you as we can so we can thank you in person and answer any questions you may have. Please email one of us and we will work to get together while we are in the neighborhood.

Rafiki Teachers College accreditation and patience

Accreditation of a degree-granting program is a long and bureaucratic process. The journey for the Rafiki Teachers College (RICE Program) began many years before we arrived, and we naively assumed that we would quickly finish it. Reflecting on that journey led me to Romans 8:25 and the need for work on the patient part.

However, we do see light at the end of the tunnel. Our campus is scheduled to be inspected by a National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) committee on January 14-15, 2025. They have told us that is the last step before our application is sent to the NCHE board for approval, probably in March or April.

Please pray all goes smoothly with no further bumps in the road!

Rafiki Teachers College students discover the joys of poetry

Meantime, our Teachers College students are making progress. Learning how to teach classically is a huge culture shift and a real struggle at the beginning.

Just about the time we despair of making progress, we are reminded of the virtue of patience by a student breakthrough as in the following poem:

A Stinging Demon

By Ivera Polline Mubuku

A black and brown mother,
Slender waist, netted eye,
A brave Wasp tending to her hive
Sharp spike for me to die.



Our featured poet

As I approached with joy,
With lightning speed – a strike!
I cursed as the flying demon
Flashed away with her pike.

Polline is a young mother at the end of her first year studying Primary Education. In addition to readings in the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and Shakespeare, her language arts course called for an original poem modeled on Emily Dickinson's "A Bird Came Down the Walk." After capturing and examining up close an actual wasp, she wrote this poem, with 6-6-8-6 meter and an ABCB rhyme scheme.

Official approval of Rafiki Education System for use in Uganda primary schools

On our other big initiative—approval of the Rafiki Education System (RES) by the National Curriculum Development Centre—we have wonderful news. The RES is now officially approved for use in Uganda for Early Childhood Development and for Primary Schools. Now all schools, including those that receive government support, may adopt our system. This has opened the door for a trial program in some of the Church of Uganda's 5,000 primary schools. We will be conducting training for about twenty-five of their teachers in early December.

Two Rafiki students compete at National Spelling Bee

In late October, two of our day students, Cyntella and Christopher, competed in the National Spelling Bee. They were supported by eight other students who had competed at the District level as well as teachers and parents.

Christopher made it all the way to the final elimination round. Contestants only had sixty seconds in which to spell their word. He missed his, but making it that far is quite an accomplishment.



Rafiki spelling bee contestants with our two national finalists

Broiler chicken raising project

In the fall term, two of our residents, Michael and Julius, undertook a project to raise and sell broiler chickens. The incentive: any profit would be put in a fund and turned over to them when they leave the Village. I was skeptical that they could make money. I was wrong.

They refurbished our chicken coop, acquired chicks and feed, and raised an initial batch of 100, losing only two chicks along the way. Most of the chickens went to our kitchen at market price. The guys used their profit to buy 200 more. They were able to let them grow slightly longer and thus be sold at a higher price. Teachers and missionaries bought a good number of them, although only Head Teacher Jessicah was able to negotiate a bargain price.



Michael tending the broilers

Michael is finishing S6 and leaving us for university—with a nice cash bonus. Julius is planning on continuing the program with a new partner for the 2025 school year.

Residents preparing to leave

Our twelve S6 residents will be leaving Rafiki on our final day of the term, December 11, and reintegrating into families in the community. They spend the last few weeks of the school term taking A level exams, the scores determining whether they will be going to university or a diploma program.

Each one has a remarkable story, and we will try to tell you a few of those in our next newsletters as they prepare to start University next fall.

Teachers Reading Group

Uganda is rich in many things: friendly, welcoming people; a wonderful climate (at least in our part of Uganda); incredible natural beauty; however, it is not rich in people who love to read. For the fall term, I (David) challenged our staff to volunteer to join me in reading and discussing each week a book of their choice. Eight brave souls joined me in reading *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

They read out loud—and re-read until we got the expression of the meaning right—delves into C.S. Lewis’ philosophy and how it expressed itself in the structure of the story and the allegory, and laughed a lot. One of the things we laughed at were my pitiful attempts to make Turkish Delight (a non-solidified mass filled with drowned ants) and my complete and utter failure to find any store in Kampala that sells Turkish Delight. Of course, had I succeeded, they might have been even more disappointed since I have yet to experience any that actually tastes good.

Finally, a classical text exchange between a Rafiki Teachers College student and its principal

Student: [In the *Odyssey* [an abridged, young readers version], I struggled because what I read in the novel [the unabridged *Odyssey*] is kinda different with the book we have—it is a bit brief... I do not know if it is a good reason.

Principal: What novel?

S: *The Odyssey*, I read it last term from the school library.

P: For pleasure?

S: Yes and curiosity because people were talking about it.

P: It’s a great story.

S: It is and I loved the kind of woman Penelope was.

P: Yes, ask the Lord for one like that!

S: It’s not really easy to find one of such kind.

P: Luke 1:37: For nothing will be impossible with God.

S: True.

S: Mrs. Graves, I wanted to ask you something, but I was a bit skeptical about your reaction.

P: Fire away.

S: Are students in RICE allowed to date?

P: There is no rule against it.

Watch future newsletters to see if Penelope is in fact attending our Rafiki Teachers College.

In closing

We are privileged to be here and thank God for each of you and for your prayers and financial support. We hope to see you in the coming weeks to catch up and to tell you more about what God is doing in Uganda.



Senior secondary students on a field trip to learn about the agriculture sector in Uganda



Early Childhood students dress in national costumes and learn about traditional culture

Please pray for

- Full financial support for us to continue serving in Uganda (<https://RafikiFoundation.org/missionary/michelle-and-david-graves-252>).
- Rafiki to grow to 70 missionaries on the field in 2025.
- All Rafiki Teachers Colleges—particularly ours here in Uganda—to be filled up and complete the accreditation process.
- Completion of the secondary curriculum accreditation process (final changes under review as this is written).
- Rafiki Foundation to attain full funding of 3,700 Rafiki students and orphans by end of this year.
- All of our children and students to come to know God early and become godly contributors.
- 100 schools in Africa to be using the Rafiki Bible Study and curriculum.
- The Rafiki Classical Academy in Eustis, Florida to continue to grow and be a model for other schools and for training new missionaries.
- Wisdom as we steward all the resources God has given us and that the distribution of every Bible, Bible study, and the curriculum would bear much fruit.
- Continued safety and protection for the Uganda Village from criminal gangs and threats of Islamic terrorism.
- Awakening in the church around the world.

Have a Joyous Christmas and a very Happy New Year,



Michelle and David Graves