



The Rafiki Foundation, Inc.

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December 2009

“He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth . . .” (Luke 1:14 NIV).



The Ten:

During the first week of November, we learned a local church partner was having difficulty taking care of the ten orphans in their children’s home. Financial problems were impacting their ability to put food on the table and send the kids to school. The church leadership asked Rafiki President Rosemary Jensen to please take these children as they were unable to care for them properly. Rosemary, out of the compassion of her heart, agreed.

The Task:

This is the first time we had taken in so many children at one time. We would like to take you along on the journey. When the Home Office team departed, Carolyn contacted Mercy, the matron in charge of the children’s home. Carolyn introduced her to Jane, a social worker who would help prepare a case history for each child. Mercy and Jane spent the next week travelling to each child’s birthplace to gather information. They talked with the respective chiefs in each area to determine who the closest relatives were and where they could be located. At the same time, Rafiki contacted two furniture makers to get five bunk beds made ASAP. Sheets, blankets, towels, toothbrushes, etc., all had to be obtained in a relatively short time. School uniforms, clothing, and shoes also needed to be measured and purchased.

The Stories:

The children’s stories are similar, so we’ll highlight only a few of them here.

A little girl was three years old when her mother died, leaving her in the care of a sixty-three-year-old grandmother and a seventy-five-year-old grandfather.

Can you imagine taking care of grandchildren at this age? The family sought help from the church.

Another child’s mother has suffered from epilepsy since she was born, is mainly bedridden and is unable to care for herself or the child. Her sixty-four-year-old grandmother has a mental condition, leaving the seventy-year-old grandfather with overwhelming responsibilities. This family could not cope.



In another case, when one young mother died of HIV, she left her baby in the care of her seventy-one-year-old mother. The grandmother attempted to care for the girl in her rural home, but at four years of age, the child was sexually molested by strangers. The grandmother decided to seek help and refuge for her granddaughter.

A five-year-old has a mother who is physically handicapped. She makes limited or no movement because of her disability. The child’s grandmother is well advanced in age and the responsibility of raising another child is too much for her to bear. The grandmother also looked to the church home as a source of help.

A six-year-old boy’s mother was involved in a fatal road accident, leaving him in the care of his seventy-two-year-old grandmother and eighty-five-year-old grandfather. The family had no income and depended on the mercy of well wishers. They sought help for their grandson.

Each child's history was compiled and Carolyn reviewed the information with our Home Office staff to verify that it was still in the best interest of each child to stay in the care of a children's home. After approval was given, church elders were called to let them know every child had a green light. One hurdle successfully cleared.

The Medical Screening:

Next came time to do medical screening. Half of the children were picked up and taken a local pediatrician, Dr. Nesbitt. He is from Kenya and understands medical issues of Kenyan children. In the U.S., issues such as club feet and cleft palate would be addressed when children are very small, but here that's not always the case. Conditions such as worms, malaria, HIV, and typhoid are common in East Africa, and were checked. Then the kids went to eat burgers and chips (French fries), which they managed to devour with glee. The next day Carolyn returned for the remaining five children to be medically screened. Dr. Nesbitt declared every child was healthy. Hooray, another hurdle successfully cleared!

The Final Approval:

Then, the Home Office looked at each file and told us all ten children were eligible to come to Rafiki. Next, we met with the church officials to plan the transfer of the children in such a way to show each child how much they are loved. Representatives from the church, families, and Rafiki came together for a meeting. During the meeting, Carolyn answered lots of questions about the Rafiki Foundation, how the children would be provided for, family visits, and so forth. With the date for bringing the children to Rafiki only one week away, the families requested that they be allowed to take the children home for that week.

The Homecoming:

On November 20, the families, children, and church elders assembled at the church home and boarded a bus bound for Rafiki. Upon arrival they were given a tour of our compound. We went cottage to cottage with the Cottage Mother coming out to welcome her new child. Family members helped bring in the children and any clothing they brought along. As the group moved on, each child remained with their new Cottage Mother. The families were pleased to see how well the children would be taken care of, but the real treat came when they had dropped off the last child. The next stop on the tour was to the schools. Because school was in session, they were able to see that class sizes did not exceed eighteen students and the classrooms were bright and cheery. All of the students were dressed in smart looking uniforms (very important in Kenya!), and teaching was done in English. By the time the tour ended, the families were absolutely beaming! We could see how much these newest ten children are loved, and how thrilled the families are for the future of their children.

God's Blessing:

At the time of writing this, the ten children have been with us for one week. Our first eighty children have taken them under their wings. When it is time to play soccer on the weekends, they will walk hand-in-hand to the soccer pitch. Some children get piggy back rides and some are led around the playground to visit each piece of equipment. For us, it has been a real treat to see how eager everyone has been to bring ten kids into Rafiki. No one has complained. To look at them, the newest kids are indistinguishable from the others. They have integrated so quickly that only God could have done it.

When one of the boys received new school shoes, he asked if they were really for him. His Rafiki Mother said, "Yes, these are for you to wear to school." He said that he had never worn new shoes, or even used ones that looked nice. His Rafiki Mother showed him that he has two pairs of shoes now—one for school and another for playing outside. He was amazed!

Prayer Requests:

- Each of these ten new children needs sponsors. Would you prayerfully consider a gift as low as \$25 per month to help sponsor one of these children? Or would you pray for one of these children every day?
- Please pray for the new children's quick adjustment, good health, and the ability to learn more about the God who loves them.
- Pray for Doug as he oversees construction of cottage ten.
- Pray for Sarah as she misses her sisters and State-side family most during Christmas.
- Pray for Rebecca to keep her focus as she completes her junior year at Hardin-Simmons University.
- Pray for Doug's mom and dad. His dad now stays at an Alzheimer's unit in Big Spring, Texas.
- Pray for Carolyn's dad who is retirement age but continues to enjoy actively farming in South Dakota.

As we look forward to this special season of remembering Christ's birth and His love for each one of us, we wish you a wonderful time of praise, worship and special times with your families.

Love,

*Doug, Carolyn
Rebecca, Sarah*

Doug, Carolyn, Rebecca, and Sarah Koepke

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