



RAFIKI

FOUNDATION
MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER

December 2019 – Christie VanKuiken

Dear friends and family,

Another year has come and almost gone. It has been a great one full of God's faithfulness. It started out on a high note when thirteen of our residents at the Rafiki Village were baptized on January 1. What makes you happier than to watch "your kids" stand up and say they are believers and want to live for Christ? It was a joyous occasion and a great way to begin the year.



Baptisms

In February we said goodbye to the Ritters as long-term missionaries on the field and welcomed back Julie McKeighen to our Village. Through every hello and good-bye in our lives, God is present. Julie arrived on a holiday so we held a cook-out which also served as a way to receive her back with open arms from Ghana.



Cook-out to welcome Julie back

March was a busy month. First, three RICE students completed the full three years in our teacher training program. What a journey! They

learned to work harder than they ever had before, and came through with flying colors. Second, some of our residents and day students at the school participated in a track and field event. I was able to attend and it brought back so many great memories for me. Third, I attended Enrichment Week at our Home Office in Florida, and then was in Grand Rapids for a couple of weeks. During that time I was able to get some needed observation hours in towards the completion of my degree.



Track and field event

April marks the start of our rainy season in Liberia. We received a shipping container with curriculum and other needed supplies for the Village from our Home Office. It arrived late at night and our faithful employees and older resident boys helped to unload it. It is always exciting to get in a shipment of long-awaited provisions. It feels like Christmas when a container arrives!

In May, in addition to our morning Rafiki Bible Study, RICE students had the opportunity to dig in their Bibles to find answers to some crucial questions that our Home Office gave us to discuss. They really enjoyed searching the Scriptures to find the truth. The most wonderful part of my job is to see young men and women grow in faith and Christ-like behavior through the study of God's Word each day.



Searching God's Word

In June our mini-bus arrived bringing with it freedom to attend field trips, church conferences, and huge cost-savings on our weekly drive to church. God blessed us way beyond our expectations on such a wonderful vehicle.



The mini-bus arrives

In July we moved into our new RICE building and also took in new RICE students for the first time in over a year. We are now enjoying all of the space and beauty of our new location.

In August the graduation ceremony was held by our accrediting university, the United Methodist University, and our graduates took part to receive an Associates Degree in Elementary Education. What a joy it was to see our first three-year graduates, the fruit of much hard work. They serve as an encouragement to the rest of the students that the goal is attainable.



RICE graduate

At the end of September and in early October, I traveled back to the United States and was able to do some speaking updates in churches, got in

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some additional observation hours, and passed my teacher certification exam for Michigan. Hooray!

In November, I attended a classical education conference in Kenya with Julie McKeighen, a national teacher from our school, and a soon-to-graduate RICE student. The event was well-attended and provided practical suggestions and training on implementing classical education that we can start to use right away. It was an amazing experience for our nationals who had never been out of the country.



Classical education conference

Now here we are in December already and about to celebrate the birth of Jesus once more. It has been another year of God's grace, care, guidance, and love. Thank you for your love and support on this journey. A meaningful verse that we have recently studied in the RBS is, "**The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever**" (1 Peter 1:24b-25). I love this verse because it tells me of the brevity of my life, but comforts me with the fact that God's Word is eternal. It reminds me to focus on what matters, which is on things above. As each year goes by faster than the last, it is a comfort that all the promises God made to us in His Word are true and we can put our hope fully in those promises of Christ's return and an eternity with Him in heaven. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Love,

Christie

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