

Church team aims to build school, good will in Uganda

**By Lakiesha McGhee -- Bee Staff Writer
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Angel Espinoza had just lost her job, but she took a leap of faith and looked beyond her plight.

On Wednesday, she joined 37 other Sacramento-area volunteers on a goodwill mission to Uganda. Their goal is both lofty and practical: to build a school for 100 children, most orphaned by years of civil war and the AIDS epidemic.

"This is something that you're called upon to do," Espinoza said last week at New Life Community Church in Fair Oaks. "I've been waiting and praying about this for a long time."

The church members are part of a missionary team organized by World Harvest Mission, a faith-based nonprofit in North Highlands.

For more than 15 years, the Rev. William Kasirye, its executive director, has helped his homeland of Uganda by organizing volunteers who want to show God's love by answering real-life needs.

He founded World Harvest Mission in 2001 to mobilize churches to help people in other countries. Such acts of generosity and support hold even greater meaning during a time of terrorism and war, he said.

Kasirye, 43, also a member of New Life Community Church, balances his goodwill missions with his work as a statistician for the California Public Employees' Retirement System. He has returned to his homeland on several missions since moving to the United States in 1987 as a college student.



The Rev. William Kasirye packs computers into his van Sept. 4 for shipment to Uganda. Kasirye is leading 38 area volunteers to his homeland in Africa to erect a school for orphans and open a women's center.

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"We're not going to Uganda thinking we're Superman or Superwoman," Kasirye said, while packing for the trip at his North Highlands home. "We go there to serve."

Within two weeks, Kasirye and the volunteers hope to build a 3,000-square-foot school in Kyaggwe, a fishing village near Lake Victoria. The volunteers will stack interlocking blocks made of compressed cement, soil and water.

The Christian primary school will serve students from a nearby orphanage, Kasirye said.

The project is part of a plan to develop 30 acres in Kyaggwe owned by Uganda's Africa Renewal Ministries, which helps the country's children through financial sponsorships.

In addition to their manual labor, the volunteers plan to visit 48 other Ugandan schools and universities to minister and share their faith.

They also will help develop a women's training center in Entebbe, near the Ugandan capital of Kampala, to teach sewing, knitting and computer skills. Finished products, including clothing and crafts, will be sold in the United States to help support Ugandan families, Kasirye said.

"It's not that the people of Uganda are stretching out their hand and begging," he said. "They just need help to carry out their dreams and visions."

He will bring local donations of sewing and knitting machines to the women's training center and computers for an Internet cafe. British Airways will transport the bulky items for free.

Other business donors include Meissner A-1 Household and Industrial Sewing Machine Co. in Sacramento, which serviced about 25 sewing machines for free and contributed pedals and parts. PPSP Recycling in Sacramento is donating 20 computers and video equipment.

Kasirye said he received about 100 soccer balls from Nike for the new school in Kyaggwe.

At a meeting a week before volunteers left, they talked excitedly about how donations from across the country would help them achieve their tasks.

Like Espinoza, many of the volunteers spoke about overcoming barriers to answer

the call to service. For 15-year-old Kasee Hodge of Orangevale, finding money for the \$2,200 trip was a miracle in itself.

"I only had \$250," Kasee said. "But I'm going to Uganda, so I feel it was meant to be."

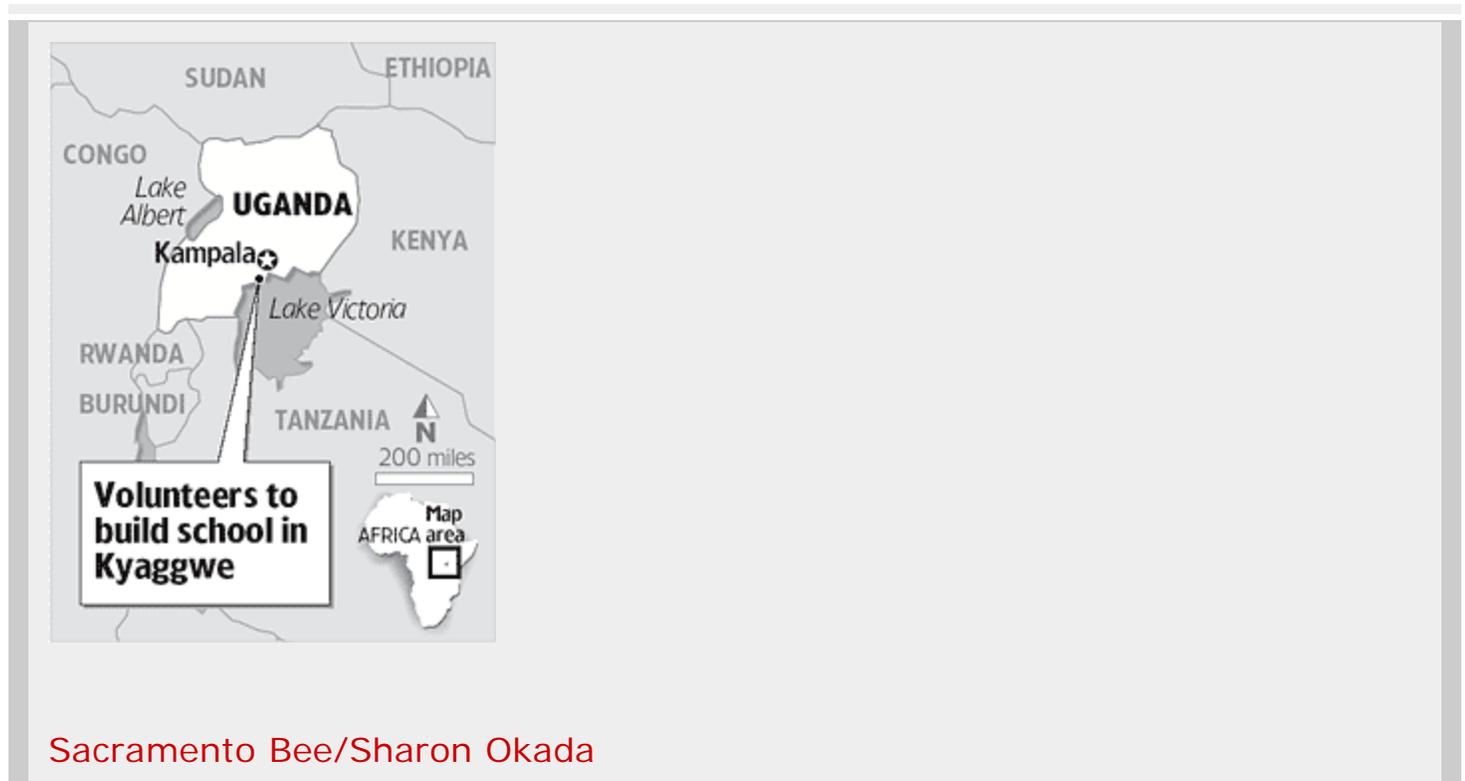
Pastor Jeff Kelderman of New Life Community Church said this is the first trip to Uganda by volunteers from his congregation, so many had practical questions.

After fielding queries about foods served in Uganda and the availability of electricity for hair dryers, Kelderman told the group to "keep a good heart and attitude and do everything without complaining.

"This trip isn't about you and it isn't about me," Kelderman said. "It's about the people of Uganda and representing Jesus Christ."

About the Writer

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