

PARISH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BALLYROAN NEWSLETTER

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Thanks to Sr. Margaret Corkery for her many years of service to our parish and we wish her well in her new assignment. Sr. Margaret has been doing the newsletter since Adam was a boy and we will come to a new arrangement over the summer months. In the meantime our newsletter will take on a variety of types to inform and entertain. We will be inviting Sr. Margaret back in September for a more formal farewell.

A Ballyroan Parish Social Golf Outing has been arranged at Grange Golf Club for 17th July with Teams of 4 any combination. Cost €60 per player including Meal (only €20 for members of Grange G C). We would like to invite all local golfers to join us for a purely social parish outing. For Timesheet booking please contact John Byrne (087 2937755), John Shortt (087 2569337), Tommy Flynn (0868525951). Timesheet from 8.00am to 3.30pm. Sponsorship/prizes welcome.

Uganda Revisited Feb.14th - 24th April '09

On the 14th February we (Antoinette and John O'Connell of Elkwood) flew to Entebbe, Uganda to do eight weeks voluntary work in Mbikko, in Jinja, Uganda, East Africa. Antoinette had been teaching in Dabani, Uganda back in the sixties!! and always dreamed of going back.

While in Uganda we stayed in Mbikko which is part of a shanty town just ten minutes drive from Jinja, the second largest town in Uganda and is very poor. We worked with Sr. Maureen Carroll (Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa) at their Community Centre in Mbikko.

The Community Centre was opened in 2001 by President Mary McAleese and was co-funded by Trocaire. The Project is one that the people of Mbikko requested. The people are very friendly and gracious and really appreciated our work.

The Project includes the following programmes:

1. Education for Life (including Aids Awareness)
2. Community Health (Training Leaders to in work the local Community)
3. Adult Literacy
4. Support for Widows (70 widows) which includes income generating projects.

John and Antoinette ran courses and workshops for the staff working in the Community Centre. Antoinette was also involved in workshops for Teachers on Behaviour Management, Multiple Intelligences and How to manage children with Learning Difficulties. In addition she held a Seminar for the Parents of children with Special Needs. John also held seminars for Leaders from the zones of the local township in Leadership and the development of skills to build and implement a work programme. He also gave a course in Project Proposal to the staff of the Community Centre.

We visited the local schools (seventeen in all) and were shocked to see how poor the schools are. All the schools have huge class numbers (the average was 103 children per teacher). One class had 163 children. Children are squeezed into desks. Books are shared between four to six children in most of the schools. Visual aids of any kind were nowhere to be seen!!!

However Education is highly valued and parents will go hungry to get money to send their children to school. We plan to collect second-hand books to help these schools. We have a list of books they would like us to send out to them. Many families have school books lying around the house that they have no use for and we would gladly accept them. Please see attached list.

It was a wonderful experience and a great privilege for us to work in such an appreciative community. So if anyone would like to help or contribute to this great cause please contact us at 4941849. Many thanks to all those who so generously contributed already.

John & Antoinette O Connell.