



● UNIFAT: A story of hope, education, and love\*

This past June, math teacher Connie Ring, religion teacher Paul Kindt '90, and alumnus Michael Zimmer '67 took a group of students and parents to Northern Uganda to visit the school (UNIFAT) and people they've been passionately supporting for the past few years. Their trip is featured on pages 6-7, but there's so much more to the story than what we can cover in two pages. For more about the trip, I encourage you to read Connie's personal journal, visit Paul's photo gallery, and watch the student-created movie, which are available on our website.\*\* But for those of you unfamiliar with this story, I can offer you a brief glimpse of the chronology.

The spark that ignited the flame within Connie Ring began in the fall of 2005 during a Mayerson leadership conference. She and several students watched a video about the "invisible children" of Uganda. The film was created by three college students who stumbled across a humanitarian travesty in the northern part of that country. They discovered that children of all ages had to walk miles each night, fleeing their villages to larger cities to avoid abduction by a rebel militia known as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The students filmed their plight and began a youth grassroots effort to highlight the tragedy of this nightly pilgrimage. They focused national attention on the massive kidnappings of these children and the horrors they had to face as "killers" for Joseph Kony, the militia's rebel leader. To date, more than 30,000 children have been kidnapped, and the civil war continues.

Touched by the Invisible Children movement, Connie and her students immediately got involved. They showed the film internally, raising funds to support the cause. Then they expanded their focus, getting other schools and students involved. We chronicled their passion, programs, and success in the spring/summer 2006 edition of *Moeller Magazine*, and an alumnus, Michael Zimmer '67 contacted Connie.



He told her about his work with an elementary school in Northern Uganda called UNIFAT (Upper Nile Institute for Appropriate Technology). He and his wife Jill had been working with an amazing woman named Abitimo Odongkara, a 73-year-old educational leader who had singlehandedly developed this school in Gulu to save the city's children and families – and I mean that literally.

Connie and her students knew immediately they wanted to help. Along with Michael, they began a dynamic collaboration that has enveloped Moeller and 12 additional schools in a targeted effort to support Abitimo's school. They renamed their organization, calling it Unified for UNIFAT. We featured the current results of that effort in our last edition of *Moeller Magazine*. But the bottom line is this: Connie and her army of supporters – including Moeller teachers, staff, and parents – raised \$47,000 last year, and they are now supporting 120 students, which includes tuition, food, clothing, and health care. During her first trip to Uganda (and I assure you there will be many more), she and her crew were able to see the manifestation of their efforts. The vivid and intimate descriptions pouring from her journal describe it best. But this story is far from over. And I'll keep you informed along the way.

As always, please keep in touch,



*Johanna*  
Johanna

P.S. Connie is currently looking for donations to help offset student expenses for next year's trip to Uganda. If you are interested in helping her with this effort – or with any other aspect of her cause – please contact her at [CRing@Moeller.org](mailto:CRing@Moeller.org).

\* This headline is taken from the title of the movie the U4U students created after their trip to Uganda.

\*\* Connie's personal journal, Paul's photo gallery, and the student-created movie can be accessed at [www.Moeller.org](http://www.Moeller.org) under the News & Events tab (select "Moeller Magazine"). The Cincinnati Enquirer has also done a great job featuring the work of Connie and her students. Education reporter Cindy Kranz recently wrote a story on the Uganda trip that you can also access on that Web page.

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Moeller senior Derek Bresnen assists math teacher Bruce Nelson with a calculus experiment that closely resembles a famous one by Galileo. "While ours is electronic, Galileo had to use candles sticking up through a wooden ramp," says Nelson. "Both Galileo's and our experiment are investigating acceleration (how an object's velocity is changing), specifically the force of gravity. What does calculus have to do with this? It is calculus that allows us to look at both the average velocity over a given period of time and the instantaneous velocity at any given moment in time. If we send our car down the ramp, we can easily calculate its average speed. But a more interesting question is, 'What was its velocity at the 4th second or the 7th second as its speed was increasing due to the force of gravity?' These and other questions/experiments led Newton and Leibnitz to independently develop a branch of mathematics to help answer them – calculus!"

**Moeller Math Teacher Initiates Accessible Calculus Course**

**MOELLER MATH TEACHER**

Bruce Nelson believes all students can learn – even if it's calculus!

Beginning this fall, non-AP students have the opportunity to learn calculus at Moeller. The course promises hands-on learning opportunities and an in-depth study of history (yes, history!) to give students a new

perspective of this seemingly esoteric study.

"Mathematics is often taught with a 'mechanics' perspective," says Nelson. "In other words, here is how you do 'this' – and now here are 20 more problems like 'this' for you to do. It is all about the process, with no point of reference about where or why 'this' came to be the way

it is. Almost every subject, from literature to psychology to art, is taught historically. You learn from studying the great people who founded or advanced their subject. If you want to be a great writer you would study, say Shakespeare or Hemingway. In psychology you might study Freud or Jung. It seems though in mathematics we rarely do this. We rarely look at the works of those who advanced mathematics – how and why and what motivated them. So teaching mathematics from a historical perspective is about teaching our subject like other subjects are taught."

"A course such as this encourages our students to appreciate the academic disciplines as interconnected and complimentary, as opposed to isolated in both comprehension and application," says Academic Dean Chris Wilke. "They learn that in reality, all subjects are connected – from math to history to English to science. Teaching calculus from a historical perspective also puts the subject in context and enables students to see more clearly the relationship between the past and present."

Teaching modern calculus by studying the past also increases retention and has a greater overall impact on student learning, says Nelson. "Some (math) teachers do interject (historical) snippets during

their teaching, which certainly makes for a more interesting lecture, and studies show that giving students a point of reference increases retention," he says. "Greater impact, however, may come from actually going back to the original document that was published (or its earliest translation) in order to truly give a student a deeper perspective. To study those who had a tremendous impact on the formation of calculus, from Archimedes in about 250 B.C. to Newton and Leibnitz in 1700 A.D., is to gain insight and breadth of knowledge that can only be gained by studying the masters. It is like comparing a degree from technical school to a degree from a liberal arts college. They both may be able to do the job, but the bachelor of arts has a greater depth and understanding of the 'big picture.' Obviously, this needs to be combined with other teaching methods, such as hands-on experimentation, but it is the melding of all these into one class that will yield the greatest impact and depth of learning."

"Even more, the beauty of this course is that it is accessible to most all students and not just those who pursue AP-level curricula," says Dean Wilke. "I applaud Mr. Nelson and the Math Department for being so progressive."



Pictured left: (from left, standing): Bro. Robert Flaherty, S.M., and Patrick Blanks. From left, statue level: Tim Martin, Mark Nugent, Scott Grotjan, Brian Vonderhaar, Matt Almario, and Adam Tardio.

**Seniors Receive Special Honors**

**NINE SENIORS RECEIVED** special honors at the fall Academic Awards Assembly: Class of 2009 Special Awards

- Matthew Almario** – George Eastman Young Leaders Award Presented for outstanding academic achievement and leadership.
- Patrick Blanks** – Williams College Book Award Presented for intellectual leadership and student achievement.
- Scott Grotjan** – Xerox Award Presented for innovation and information technology.
- Timothy Martin** – Michelson-Morley Award Presented for excellence in science and math.
- Daniel McCormick** – Rensselaer Medal Award Presented for excellence in math and science.
- Mark Nugent** – University of Notre Dame Book Award Presented for outstanding academic achievement and leadership.
- Adam Tardio** – Saint Michael's College Book Award Presented for scholarship and service.
- Brian Vonderhaar** – Bausch & Lomb Honorary Science Award Presented for outstanding achievement in the field of science.
- Eric Werner** – Frederick Douglass & Susan B. Anthony Award Presented for outstanding commitment to social justice.

By Johanna Kremer

# JOURNAL FROM UGANDA: Educating Children, Building Schools, Saving Lives

**SATURDAY, JUNE 21, 2008:** At one point as we were walking to the new building, Abitimo said, "This is what you have done. You finished this building for the children. Because of this building, our class sizes will decrease, and we will hire more teachers. Those teachers will be paid, and they will in turn save more lives of the families. This is what you have done."

Quotes like these smacked the kids and me square between the eyes. This is what we have done. We are educating children, providing income for construction workers and teachers, saving lives in Northern Uganda. This is what we have done. This is what we are doing...

Those are the words from the journal of math teacher Connie Ring. In June, she and religion teacher Paul Kindt '90 and alumnus Michael Zimmer '67 took four students and three parents to Northern Uganda for two weeks. Together they met the children and families and visited the school they have worked so passionately to help support for the past two years.

The journey in June was life-changing for all people involved. But for Connie, it was also the affirmation of what she has determined is part of her life mission: To support the Northern Ugandan children of Gulu and their school, UNIFAT.

The trip to Uganda was the natural progression of an odyssey that began three years ago when Connie and several students attended a Mayerson leadership seminar. (See "Editor's Note" on page 2 for more background

information.) It has since evolved to an organization known as Unified for UNIFAT (U4U), currently involving 13 public and private schools and countless students. Last year they raised \$47,000, helping to fund a building that was desperately needed. The money also supported 120 students, paying their tuition, food, clothing, and health care. In addition, U4U sought grant money from Moeller's new Youth Philanthropy Council (see MYPC, page 4), and they were able to provide much-needed mosquito nets to help prevent malaria and other diseases.

During the trip, Connie kept a daily journal, complete with pictures and reflections along the way. She intimately described the day's events, the people she met, the culture she encountered, and her reflections along the way. "The audience for the journal was originally my husband," she said. "There is an Internet café in Gulu, so I would send him installments of the journal while I was there. Weeks after returning home he told me that he would be glued to the computer every night reading it, laughing, crying... He said it made him understand on a deeper level why I'm so attached to Abitimo and the children in Northern Uganda. He suggested that I share it with my family and friends, and it just kind of mushroomed from there. We have actually received donations from journal readers as a result! Who would have thought that?!"

Religion teacher Paul Kindt '90 photographed the Ugandan trip in detail. "Winston Churchill called Uganda 'the pearl of Africa,' and I'm convinced that even the worst photographer can find beauty



Greg Stanforth's sponsored child, Fungaroo Moses, dancing at his home.

Eric Werner '09 and his sponsored child, Akot Brenda.

Will Tardio shooting video of art class.

UNIFAT Classroom

Paul Kindt '90 shooting video of art class.

there," he said. "The students, the school, the teachers, the landscape – it seemed everything was photogenic. Northern Uganda makes its own pictures. I just pushed a button on a camera...about three thousand times."

Oh, and one more thing: The U4U students also produced a movie about UNIFAT. U4U's Billy Yates '08, currently a Miami University student majoring in photography, pursued another grant from Moeller's YPC that enabled them to purchase HD video equipment to record their trip. "All video (of the trip) was shot by Billy and '07 grad Will Tardio," said Ring. "Hours of editing were completed by Will and senior Eric Werner. Eric also narrated the film. I have never been involved in making a movie before, so I had no idea the time and detail involved. Will and Eric would work eight hours and have two minutes of completed film by the end. And neither of these guys have any experience –

they are completely self taught! They never cease to amaze me! I couldn't be more proud of the film and of the boys."

They named their film "UNIFAT: A Story of Hope, Education, and Love."

All three resources – the journal, the photo documentary, the movie – vividly narrate the story of UNIFAT, and they all are available on our website (see below). But this tale is far from over. Stay tuned for the sequel. There will be much more to come.

\* Connie's personal journal, Paul's photo gallery, and the student-created movie can be accessed at [www.Moeller.org](http://www.Moeller.org) under the News & Events tab (select "Moeller Magazine"). The Cincinnati Enquirer has also done a great job featuring the work of Connie and her students. Education reporter Cindy Kranz recently wrote a story on the Uganda trip that is also available on that Web page.

**UGANDAN TRIP PARTICIPANTS:** Will Tardio '07 and his dad Chris Tardio; Eric Werner '09 and his mom Ruthanne Werner; Meghan Marth ('10 from Sycamore High School) and her dad Tom Marth; Billy Yates '08, bottom right photo; math teacher Connie Ring; religion teacher Paul Kindt '90; and alumnus Michael Zimmer '67.