

Step Up! American Association for Rwandan Women

December 2009

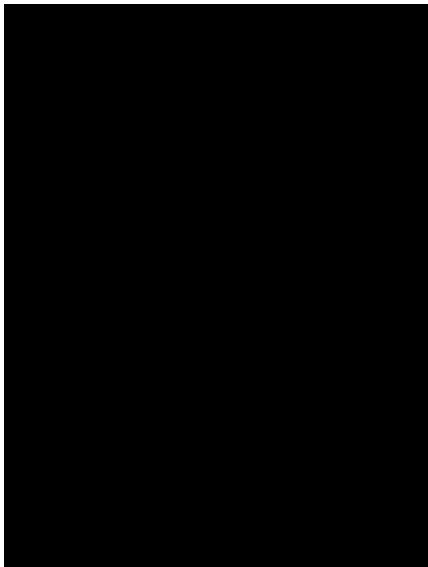
1214 Steelhead Ct, Ste 3B, Columbia, MO 65203, 573-445-5820, www.StepUpRwandaWomen.org

2009 A Dance of Hope Fundraiser



Rwandan Dancers Displaying Costumes

On May 2, 2009, Step Up held the Dance of Hope fundraiser in Columbia, MO. The event was a huge success! It included a silent auction followed by dinner and a brief statement from our president Bea Gallimore. This was followed by a live auction. One of our newest board members, Kim Webb, put together an excellent slide show reminding us of Step Up's purpose. The event was capped off by a wonderful performance of traditional Rwandan dancing performed by young Rwandans who flew in from all over the United States. After their performance the dancers invited the guests for an impromptu dance lesson!



Abasa Update

Step Up traveled to Sahera to meet with the Abasa women. Abasa is a Kinyarwanda word that loosely translates to mean, "We are all the same." Abasa was formed by a Catholic nun, Sister Speciosa, as women came into Butare Hospital after the genocide, seeking care for sexual violence injuries and sexually transmitted diseases. It includes members from both groups affected by the genocide and stands as an example of women overcoming differences to help each other. Since our first trip in 2006, when we met this remarkable group of over 60 women, Step Up has worked to help them rise above abject poverty. Because of lack of availability of education, most are subsistence farmers.



Abasa Member with Donated Cow

This year we gave 12 women cows bringing the total number of cows given to the women to about 30. A cow not only provides milk, a valuable source of protein,

the manure is used to enrich the farm fields thereby increasing yields. In Rwanda, a cow can be the difference between being able to feed your children or seeing them go hungry. Any extra vegetables can be sold at market to produce school fees, or a needed doctor's visit. It is testament to the solidarity of the group, that the women not yet chosen to receive cows are jubilant for their "sisters" who become owners. As the cows are bred, first offspring will be given to those still waiting.

Other Abasa women were proud to share their honey crop with us. Three years ago, Step Up started eight women in the profession of beekeeping. Not only are they harvesting honey from the hives, but the women have become so proficient, they are now traveling to other villages to teach their skills. Up until now, beekeeping has been a "males only" profession.

Sadly, we learned that some of our original Abasa friends have died of HIV contacted through genocidal rape. Others, however, are thriving--sending their children to school, setting up market stalls, and singing and dancing with enthusiasm and joy.

2009 Trauma Counseling Training

It is reported that there are three psychiatrists and only a handful of psychologists for over 9 million people living in Rwanda. And yet, the need for mental health services is enormous. Post

Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression and physical complaints directly related to the emotional aftereffects of trauma are effecting a huge portion of the population. In July, a team of four mental health professionals from Step Up traveled to Kigali to continue the goal of training professional counselors to help the many traumatized survivors of the 1994 genocide. The students were eager to participate in the hands-on, small group practice sessions in which subjects like relaxation therapy and use of storytelling were taught. Lectures on different topics such as depression and anxiety disorders offered information to aid in understanding the aftereffects of violence. Specialized topics such as those addressing HIV/AIDS and substance abuse were added to round out the program.

Membership and Donations

If you are interested in sustaining the ongoing Step Up projects in Rwanda, consider joining Step Up or making a tax-deductible donation. Membership information is available below or on our website. If you are already a member of Step Up, we appreciate your support and encourage you to renew your membership for 2010.

Member Information:

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Membership Levels

\$500 - Platinum Level

\$300 - Gold Level

\$200 - Silver Level

\$100 - Bronze Level

\$60 - Basic Membership

\$25 - Student Membership

One Time Donation

Donation Amount \$ _____