

Uganda native pushes importance of orphans and AIDS crisis in Africa

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The idea that one man can help thousands seems like an imaginary idea in the eyes of some, but not for Uganda native, Sam Tushabe.

Mr. Tushabe, founder and Executive Director of AIDS Orphans Education Trust (AOET), spoke Thursday evening to listeners at the Hilliker YMCA, 300 Sloan Boulevard, Bellefontaine, about the moment he was awakened to child homelessness in Africa, and the reasons behind founding AOET.

AOET, an independent organization with the prime mandate of providing an education to desperately poor, neglected and forgotten orphans whose parents have died of AIDS, was began by Mr. Tushabe after a vacation was spoiled when he witnessed a homeless four year old girl digging through trashcans for food.

“After I saw that child, it seemed like there were hundreds of children on the street,” said Mr. Tushabe. “I knew I had to do something about what I had just seen.”

Shortly after this encounter in 1985, Mr. Tushabe was approached by a mother of nine children who explained to him that she could not care for her ninth child. This encounter would lead to the beginning of the AOET.

Mr. Tushabe, a cook at the time, agreed to keep the child in the home of his mother but pay for all of the necessities of child care and the child’s education. One child soon turned to hundreds in a small amount of time.

“I was afraid of failing,” Mr. Tushabe stated. “I was scared I wasn’t going to be able to support them because I was just a cook.”

With the help of donations from different individuals, the AOET did not fail and today helps thousands of African children and their families.

AOET focuses on moving children from the streets of Africa into foster families that provide a mother and a father who care for them responsibly.

In 2005, AOET established a Children’s stabilization village as a response to the growing number of needy homeless children and their care takers. The Children’s Village provides free housing for families for up to four years, allowing time to save money to build their own houses while also offering psychosocial support.

AOET also offers thousands of orphans with Health Centers for AIDS patients and schools, both primary and high schools that specialize in trades such as welding and carpentry.



“Children have to learn to work for themselves,” said Mr. Tushabe. “It’s an honor and a privilege and kids are proud of themselves when they go out and work.”

With branches in five different African countries, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Rwanda, and Botswana, the AOET focuses on “The Three Pillars” to help HIV/AIDS victims; Prevention through educating people about HIV/AIDS, Care through mobile clinics for patients, and Support for victims of the disease.

33 million people worldwide are infected with HIV/AIDS, 22 million of which live in Sub-Saharan Africa. Mr. Tushabe explained that 2.2 million people live with the disease AIDS, and 1.8 million of those reside in Sub-Saharan Africa.

“If that is not a crisis, I don’t know what is.” said Mr. Tushabe.

AOET offers treatment for patients, and over 2,500 AIDS patients currently depend on AOET.

“Someone with AIDS needs extra attention,” said Mr. Tushabe. “They need hugs and smiles...they do not need shunned.”