

medcare newsletter

A lifeline for Ugandan children

Autumn Edition | September 2021

Put a smile on a child's face this Christmas

The Wellspring Child Sponsorship Scheme has proved to be one of the most successful projects undertaken by Medcare.



Over the past 13 years over 200 children have received sponsorship. 24 adolescents have graduated from the scheme, their health and life circumstances greatly improved. These young people have received vocational training for their future employment and provided with a knowledge of their own self worth and hope for the future. Lives saved and transformed.

However, there are many hundreds of children desperately needing assistance. The Wellspring Sponsorship Scheme presently has 25 sick, disabled and deprived children on the waiting list, all of whom have been waiting over 2 years to find a sponsor - and the time is running out for some.

Medcare is appealing to all our supporters to assist us in spreading the word of the needs of these children to colleagues, family and friends this Christmas. Our aim is to find sponsors for all 25 children by the New Year. Such sponsorship will not only save and transform lives but will engender hope in the hearts of the children and their guardians, putting smiles on their faces this Christmas.

For further details of the children requiring urgent sponsorship please contact Pauline in the Medcare office. Email admin.medcare@icloud.com or call 01928 740538.

medcare - Together we can make a difference

Medcare Christmas Fair

It will soon be Christmas! Come and join in the pre-Christmas fun at the **Medcare Christmas Fair on Thursday 18th November. Once again it is to be held at the Frodsham Parish Hall. Doors will open at 10.30am.** There will be opportunities to buy Christmas gifts and cards and sit and have a mulled wine and early mince pie. You can also send a letter to Santa, all ready for Christmas, with the help of Elf on the Shelf! For more information please contact the Medcare office on **01928 740538** or email **admin.medcare@icloud.com**. If anyone would like to set up a stall at this event please contact Pauline in the Medcare office.



Sickle Cell Disease

Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is an inherited blood disorder. It is inherited when a child has 2 sickle cell genes, one from each parent.

Children with SCD make an abnormal type of hemoglobin. This is the protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen to all parts of the body. Healthy red blood cells with normal hemoglobin are round and move easily through blood vessels.

When a child has SCD, the red blood cells can become hard and sticky. They are shaped like the letter C - i.e. sickle shaped. These damaged red blood cells (sickle cells) clump together. They can't move easily through the blood vessels and, as a consequence, get stuck in small blood vessels and block blood flow. This blockage can cause pain and can also damage major organs.

Most children with SCD will start showing symptoms in their first year, often around 5 months. Symptoms may vary and may be mild or severe.

Symptoms can include:

- **Anaemia:** This is very common in SCD and is caused by the body attempting to destroy the abnormal sickle shaped red blood cells, and through damage to the spleen.
- **Jaundice:** Sickle cells don't live as long as normal red blood cells. The liver filters out dead blood cells but sickle cells die faster than the liver can filter them out, causing jaundice.
- **Pain:** When sickle cells move through small blood vessels they can get stuck. This blocks blood flow, causing pain. This sudden pain can occur in the hands and feet (particularly in young children), ribs and breastbone, spine, pelvis, tummy, legs and arms.
- **Acute chest symptoms:** When sickle cells stick together they can block oxygen flow in the tiny vessels in the lungs. This often occurs suddenly, when the body is under stress from infection, fever or dehydration. This has a similar appearance to pneumonia and can include fever, pain and a violent cough.

- **Enlarged spleen:** The spleen gets enlarged and painful when sickle cells get stuck and build up in the spleen. Fewer red blood cells are able to move which can cause a sudden drop in haemoglobin. Such an episode can be fatal. A damaged spleen can also put the child at serious risk of severe infections.
- **Infections:** Children and babies with SCD are more susceptible to infections such as pneumonia, meningitis, eye disease, and avascular necrosis of the hip (destruction of the hip joint) which leads to lameness and pain.
- **Strokes:** Blood clots are more commonly formed when the child has a Sickle Cell crisis. If these clots reach the brain the child can suffer from a sudden stroke or death.
- **Delayed growth** during childhood and delayed puberty.



Immaculate in 2011



Immaculate in 2016

There is no cure for SCD, although various medicines are available which can provide the child with expectations of a healthier future.

SCD contributes substantially to mortality in children younger than 5 years in sub-Saharan Africa. In Uganda, **20,000 babies per year** are thought to be born with sickle cell disease, but accurate data are not available. The fate of these children is largely unknown although there is evidence that 70-80% die before the age of 2 years and malaria is thought to be a major determinant of mortality. Life expectancy for a sickle cell sufferer in sub-Saharan Africa is still less than 20 years on average.

Every 1 in 50 disabled people in Uganda has been disabled by SCD.

In Africa, Uganda has the 5th highest burden, a situation aggravated by limited and inaccessible formal social

support structures to aid patients and families cope better with the psychosocial burden of SCD. In addition, this has been coupled with stigmatisation and discrimination of people living with sickle cell disease causing isolation from family and society.

In 2009 a team of young people from the UK met a child called Immaculate. She suffered from SCD and was 9 years of age. Immaculate was small for her age, very thin, listless and often in pain. She often missed school because she was too tired or in too much pain to walk to the school, and was therefore, despite her obvious intelligence, poorly educated. On meeting Immaculate the young team were saddened to realise that this child had no joy in her childhood. She just sat and suffered day by day with no hope and fearful of the future. This 'chance' meeting inspired the team to propose a child sponsorship scheme for children such as Immaculate suffering from incurable diseases in Uganda. They called this scheme COIN - Children with Ongoing Illnesses in Need. There are presently nearly 200 children on the sponsorship scheme – now called the Wellspring Child Sponsorship Scheme - suffering from various problems, such as SCD, AIDS, epilepsy, and physical disabilities. Provision of food, medicines, social care, education and love has transformed and saved the lives of hundreds of children. Nearly 30 children have 'graduated' from the sponsorship scheme, having grown up to be healthy, confident young people, with jobs following vocational training, and hope for the future. Sadly Immaculate died suddenly in her sleep at the age of 16 years. She was about to embark on vocational training to assist her in the future.

Medcare decided to set up a special scholarship for vocational training, in memory of Immaculate, our first sponsored child.

This is called the Immaculate Nakanjako Vocational Scholarship. This is awarded each year to the child, of an appropriate age, who has contributed and achieved the most in the Wellspring Teenage Group, at a cost of £500.

Christmas cards on sale now!

Medcare is once again selling their beautiful Christmas cards but this year at a reduced rate. With 6 fun designs to choose from, each pack of 10 cards is being sold for 50p, with a bargain offer of £1 if you purchase 3 packs (of any design).

Please let Pauline know if you wish to take us up on this offer. Call **01928 740538** or email admin.medcare@icloud.com.

All proceeds will be sent directly to Uganda for the benefit of the children we serve. Happy Christmas!



Never too young to be a Medcare volunteer!

Solly Jordan is pictured below charming visitors at the Medcare stall at an event in the Manchester Airport Concorde hanger in 2015.

Now 7 years old Solly is still volunteering to help Medcare raise funds for sick, needy Ugandan children.

His younger brothers, Jasper, 4 yrs and Xander, 10 months, are following Solly's example!

You are never too young, or too old, to be a Medcare volunteer!

If you would like to be a volunteer in raising funds for Medcare please contact the Medcare office on **01928 740538** or email **admin.medcare@icloud.com**.



Fund raising in Frodsham!



Frodsham Festival in the Park

The Frodsham and Helsby Rotary Club once again organised a 'Festival' in Castle Park, Frodsham. Many local clubs and organisations set up stalls on a lovely Sunday morning in August, including Medcare.

Just over £400 was raised that day. Many thanks to the Rotary Club members for the invitation to this great event.

**£400
RAISED!**

Cocos' Family Fun Day

Cocos Playbarn, at Lady Heyes, Frodsham put on a great Family Fun Day event, on August Bank Holiday Monday; with music, food, bouncy castles, children's entertainers, stalls (including Medcare) and lots and lots of fun. The event was very busy and well attended. £600 was raised for Medcare. Many thanks to Beccy and her team for organising such a successful and fun event.

In total, £1,000 was raised for Medcare at these 2 events. Many thanks to all who helped and contributed.



**£600
RAISED!**

Noeline's Beads

African traditional handmade jewellery and adornments are very special. Local women and even men use plenty of them: necklaces, bracelets, earrings, anklets, etc. Beaded and bead weaving necklaces are among the most popular adornments in Africa.

Noeline is the housemother for 42 disabled and disadvantaged children. She and the children living in the Wellspring Home for Disabled Children, make beautiful traditional Ugandan jewellery from beads made out of recycled paper.

Every bead is rolled by hand by Noeline and the children, making each bead and each piece of jewellery totally unique. It is hard to believe that these beautiful beads are made of recycled paper. Once they have rolled several hundred beads, they colour them, string them together and apply sealant. Each bead has two layers of sealant to make it water-resistant and glossy. The beads are hung up to dry in the warm Ugandan sun. They then take the finished beads and begin to create the final product. Although each bead only takes 10 to 15 seconds to roll, the entire process from start to finish can take over a week. In that time, dozens of items can be made.

Ugandan beaded necklaces are great jewellery pieces because you can feel in each item the hands of the woman or the child who created it.

Medcare has plans, once COVID restrictions are lifted, to create a small industry for Noeline and the children, bringing back the jewellery for sale in the UK. Such funds will be used to assist Noeline in her care of the children.



Olwen and her cakes!

If you have never sampled one of Olwen's scrumptious cakes you have missed a treat!

For the past year Olwen has made cakes for celebrations and fund raising events, raising hundreds of pounds for Medcare. Olwen must have used hundreds of eggs and bags of sugar and flour, as well as spending hours and hours baking in her kitchen. She has cooked cookies, birthday cakes, tea loaves and beautiful cup cakes. Her prices are reasonable and the cakes delicious and every penny she raises goes directly to Uganda to help feed the sick, malnourished children under the care of the Wellspring Children's Medical Centre, funded by Medcare.

Many thanks to Olwen for her selfless and dedicated work raising funds for the children. If anyone wishes to order cakes from Olwen please contact the Medcare office. Call **01928 740538** or email admin.medcare@icloud.com.



Food for the starving

At the end of July '21 Medcare launched an appeal to save starving Ugandan children. A second strict lockdown had been imposed by the Ugandan government in June due to rapidly rising numbers of COVID cases in the country.

As a result many of the most vulnerable families, whose children normally attend Wellspring clinics for medical care, were deprived of jobs and income, resulting in starvation for adults and children alike.

Medcare's amazingly supportive and generous supporters **raised £3,000 within 4 days** of the beginning of the appeal, **eventually raising over £4,000!** Remarkable!

These funds were sent over immediately to the Wellspring Medical Centre for purchase of food for the families most seriously affected by the lock down.

Reports have been received from Uganda regarding the food distribution, which has taken many days to organise and distribute.



Over 300 families were fed, a total of nearly 2,000 adults and children saved from starvation. All the families were delighted and extremely grateful to receive the food distributed by Wellspring staff. Many of the families had had no food for over 2 days.



Among the families provided with food there were identified 5 families with over 10 members, 2 from the sponsorship waiting list and 3 children who have been identified by Allen, our social worker, as children in greatest need but not yet added to our waiting list. Here are some of their stories...



Erik Kisuule

Erik Kisuule is 8 years old and suffers from cerebral palsy. He has been abandoned by his parents and is cared for by his elderly grandmother, together with 10 other children.

Erik has been on the Wellspring sponsorship waiting list for over 2 years and so far has not been able to access any physiotherapy, which would greatly assist him in his mobility and daily activities. He was delighted with the food his family were given.



Zainah Nalutabi

Zainah Nalutabi is 12 years old. She suffers from Sickle Cell Disease. She lives with her parents in a large family of 12 children.

The family are so poor that they cannot afford to take Zainah to hospital when suffering from painful Sickle Cell crises and resort to local herbs. She is very small for her age and undernourished and is often in pain. Zainah has also been on the waiting list for sponsorship for over 2 years.

Their large bags of maize were greatly appreciated by this struggling family.



Haitham Ssegawa

Haitham Ssegawa is 4 years of age, suffering from cerebral palsy. His mother is very young and has been abandoned by her husband. When unable to pay the rent she was evicted from her home and is now living with her mother, together with 9 other children.

Haitham is cognitively bright and would greatly benefit from physiotherapy. He is currently on the list of especially vulnerable families compiled by the Wellspring social worker.

His mother was overwhelmed by the kindness of others in supplying her family with this additional food.



Rayan Tebayite

Rayan Tebayite is 2 years old and suffers from cerebral palsy. His parents have left him in the care of his grandmother who looks after another 9 children. The provision of additional food was a life-saver for this family. The grandmother wishes to express her thanks to all who have provided for her family.

There are many other stories of families with sick children receiving urgently needed food from Wellspring during the present Ugandan lockdown, food donated by Medcare's generous and compassionate supporters.

The Medcare Board of Trustees wish to thank you all for your donations which have made such a difference to many children and their families in Uganda.

Pauline Hutchinson

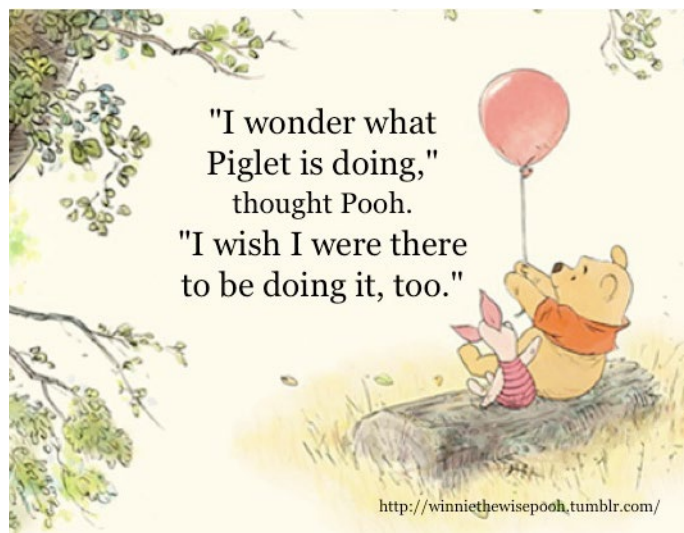
Medcare Chair

The Gift of Friendship

*"I wonder what Piglet is doing," thought Pooh.
"I wish I were there to be doing it too." Winnie-the-Pooh*

I love Winnie the Pooh quotes. Most of them are about friendship and being together. This quote reminds me of the wonderful children and staff living and working in Uganda, over 6,000 miles away from the UK, many of whom I am privileged to call my friends. Our distance apart, somehow, seems greater with the restrictions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, particularly with the disruption of international air travel.

I last visited Uganda in March 2020 and, as yet, there are no signs of the airways to Uganda being opened up. I greatly miss seeing the smiling faces of all the children and enjoying their great big hugs; observing the dedication of the Wellspring staff as they care for so many seriously ill and deprived children; seeing the courage in the disabled children cared for by Noeline and their love and care for each other; and observing the desperate needs of so many families living in severe poverty in the communities served by Wellspring. Visiting Uganda with Medcare is a humbling and inspiring experience and never fails to encourage me to work even harder to help save and transform children's lives. And so I too often wonder what they are all doing and wishing I was there with them.



Thankfully, modern technology has enabled many of us to keep in touch with loved ones and colleagues all over the world, bringing us much closer together, however far apart we may feel. Through phone calls, WhatsApp messages and videos, FaceTime and Zoom Medcare has been able to continue to make plans and decisions for individual children and for the future of the work of Medcare in Uganda, throughout the restrictions of the pandemic.

I am hopeful that Medcare team visits can be resumed in 2022. Meanwhile, we will continue to keep in touch using the technology we have been given and entrust all those in Uganda into God's loving care.

If anyone would like to join a Medcare team on a visit to Uganda when travel permits, please contact me at the Medcare office on 01928 740538.

The Medcare Board of Trustees wish to thank all our supporters for continuing to contribute to the work of Medcare in Uganda, through sponsorship, donations and contributing so generously to the appeals to 'Feed the Starving'

May God bless you as you have blessed the children.

Pauline Hutchinson
Chairman of Medcare

