

Girls in Uganda get hand from philanthropist

By JAN HOGAN

VIEW STAFF WRITER

An African proverb puts it this way — If you educate a man, you educate a husband. If you educate a woman, you educate a nation.

Summerlin resident Christen McCormick is out to educate young women. A lot of young women.

Last year, she established the Hope for Hearts Foundation to assist a girls' orphanage in Uganda. The orphanage was begun by Mugagga Lule, a Catholic priest.

Lule is from that country

and currently is on a temporary assignment to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, 1811 Pueblo Vista Drive, which the McCormick family attends.

The orphanage is called St. Elizabeth's Girls Academy and it mirrors one for boys already in existence in Uganda. The academy houses about 200 girls at any one time, from newborns to women age 21. The goal is to enlarge it with facilities to house 1,000.

Since its inception in August 2007, Hope for Hearts has raised \$40,000, much

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CHRISTEN MCCORMICK
FOUNDER, HOPE FOR HEARTS FOUNDATION

of it through the sponsor-a-child program for the girls' orphanage. A local builder, CORE, donated \$10,000 of the total sum.

Since 1998, Lule had managed to raise \$110,000, so McCormick's impact — bringing the total up to \$150,000 — was considerable, Lule said.

"When I met her, I didn't know who she was and how valuable she would be," Lule said of the Summerlin at-home mother. "She got involved right away."

In a land with no public education, the orphanage not only houses and feeds the girls, but educates them and teaches them viable career skills.

Career classes include pattern making, embroidery, catering and food preparation and jewelry making.

"What I really liked about it is that it's a hand-up project, not a hand-out one," McCormick said.

To make the jewelry's beads, the academy participants cut newspapers into long, thin, triangle-shaped strips, roll the paper, leaving a very small opening for string, paint or dye the paper, varnish it, dry it overnight, then apply paint and varnish again the next day. The third day, they string the beads to complete a necklace.

The jewelry is on sale at two Las Vegas locations — A Body in Balance, 1215 S. Fort Apache Road, Suite 150; and Annabelle's All Occasions, 4280 S. Hualapai Way.

The cost runs about \$15 for a necklace and \$5 for earrings. Profits go directly to the orphanage.

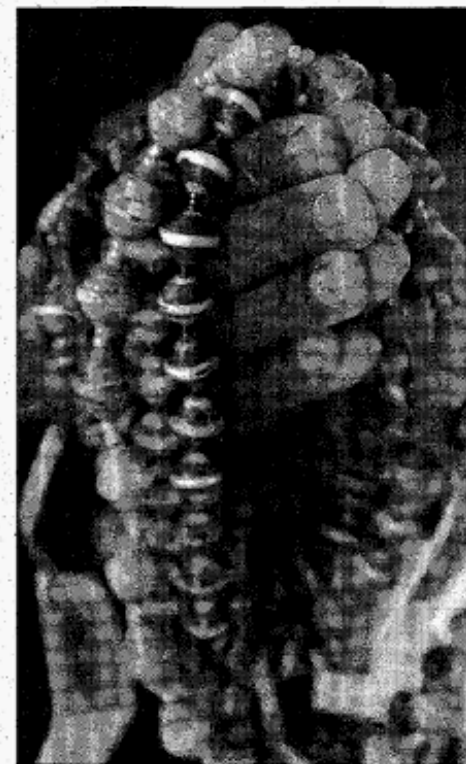
"Besides being a beautiful craft, it's something tangible that brings it home to Americans," said Ann Trobough, owner of Annabelle's and a board member of the Hope for Hearts Foundation. "This way, they're not just some people over there, a continent away."

Residents can sponsor an orphan at the orphanage/school, which operates on a cost basis of \$3.30 a week, per girl.

McCormick gestured to her Starbucks coffee.

"That's less than this costs," she said.

Hope for Hearts is not the first project McCormick has



The Rev. Mugagga Lule holds bead necklaces made by orphans enrolled in St. Elizabeth's Girls Academy in Uganda. The orphanage was founded by Lule and receives support from the Hope for Hearts Foundation, established by Summerlin resident Christen McCormick.

JENNA DOSCH/VIEW



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The Rev. Mugagga Lule, left, and Christen McCormick talk outside St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, 1811 Pueblo Vista Drive.

lent her name to. She and her husband, Tom, owner of Astoria Homes, set up the McCormick Charitable Foundation.

The foundation benefits various children's organizations, such as the Las Vegas Children's Homeless Clinic, Children's Hospital Los Angeles and Children's Hospital Stanford.

The McCormicks have four children, two of them

adopted.

"I see myself as a guardian of children, and my job is to show others how they can be guardians of children, too," she said.

This fall, she plans to fly to Uganda to see for herself how she's helping to educate young women.

Anyone who wishes to make a donation can visit www.hopeforhearts.net.