

The River Fund wishes to thank the following groups, organizations and people for their compassionate commitment to those we serve.

- Ma Jaya and everyone at Kashi Ashram in Florida
- Broadway Cares
- Macho Products
- The Kingdom Church, Gifford Florida
- The River Fund New York
- Freddie Woolfork & the Gifford Youth Center
- Stamp Out Hunger:
- Mike Bunker & the Sebastian Postal Workers
- Gayle & Ken Seifert
- Jongs Produce
- Publix Super Market
- Lynde Francis (Kali Priya)
- Vicki Gershon & Ross Rieder
- John Psillas
- Daniel Pingel (Swarupa)
- Father Centurio Olaboro
- Monsignor Matthew Ojara
- Joseph Onyango
- P. Kumar
- Deborah Weber
- Bruce Vilanch
- Jamie Kabler
- Sean Femrite (Baba Hanuman)
- Annie Modica
- All of our faithful and tireless volunteers!



A Newsletter for Friends of The River Fund

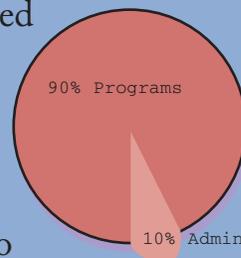
2008/2009

## Message from Ma Jaya Our Founder

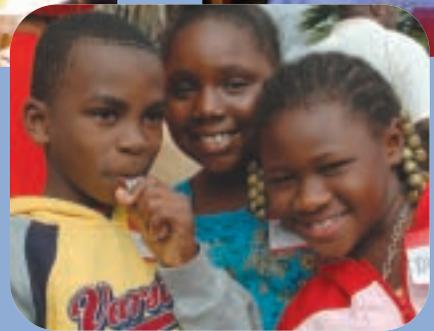
Serve God's children. Share, feed everyone, and never have a dry heart. You were born with a compassionate heart, but compassion is like flowing water. Unless you give it away, it stagnates. Don't ever doubt your capabilities to serve another human being. Use your hands, first to feed and then to pray. There are hundreds and hundreds of prayers and meditations one can do to find happiness, yet there is no prayer greater than service.



The River Fund is dedicated to providing physical, emotional and spiritual support to people living with AIDS and other life threatening illnesses and to their loved ones and caregivers. We serve the poor, those who often are alone and in need – regardless of a person's religion, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender.



Expenditures based on total revenue, 2007



State of Florida Registration: CH5279

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING, TOLL-FREE (800-435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.

# From the Executive Director:

Jaya Canterbury-Counts

As we approach our 10th year serving in Africa, I am reminded of Ma's message, "There are no throwaway people." In October, we visited the Rayland Rural Development Organization (RARUDO) in Uganda, a community we are helping toward economic sustainability. Lynde Francis, from Zimbabwe, was inside the vocational training center teaching about 50 people "Long Term Survival Skills



for HIV." I went to see the new bakery -- powered by charcoal fire since there is no electricity in this village. That's when I saw the starving young woman and her baby. The baby was tiny and listless. The mother was too malnourished to produce milk for the baby.



In rural villages, this image of mother and child is far too common. I greeted her and shook her hand in the Ugandan way. Our good friend Joseph, who runs the RARUDO project, and I agreed that we had to help this person who was in our path. Within 24 hours we had medicine, safe housing, a bed, blanket,

food and supplies for the baby. We learned the woman had been starved and beaten by her husband. She had head wounds and a broken leg from being thrown. She had returned to her village, but had no family to help her. The women we trained will look after her -- even though they told me they see many like her every day.



Who controls tradition, culture and gender roles? How does tradition affect the health of women and girls in this time of AIDS? How can we as women help other women? What are our hopes for our daughters? These are some of the questions that we ask the women of rural Uganda as we lead workshops in "Long Term Survival Skills for HIV."

This year, in the workshops, the women put on two skits. In one, a man takes a third wife, abuses the first wife, and forces the new wife into sex without a condom. Infected

with HIV, she becomes an outcast. In the second skit, a young man needs money to get married. His parents remove his 14 year old sister from school and sell her to an old man, and everyone celebrates. Both of these scenarios are common, which is why we discuss culture and women's rights in order to improve the lives of women and children in Uganda.

In its fourth year, the training has now reached over 7000 people and has empowered strong local



leaders in three regions of Uganda. Calling themselves "The River Fund Women," they are developing a grassroots network of trainers, peer educators and community organizers. We came home convinced that these volunteers are ready to run the program themselves, if we can help them with costs for workshops and direct services to families: widows, orphans and grandmothers raising



too many children with too few resources. Truly, we are witnessing the African motto, "Educate a woman - Educate the nation."

In the United States 12.6 million children live in households that experience

hunger or the risk of hunger. Even before the economic crisis, the unemployment rate for our part of Florida was 10% driven by collapse of the housing bubble, which ended jobs in construction and increased foreclosures. Typically, minorities in our county have a higher unemployment rate than average, so the people we serve are really hurting. In cooperation with the US Post Office and other local food programs, our Feed Everyone program collected almost 35,000 pounds of food. We distribute our share throughout the year in partnership with The



Kingdom Church in Gifford, but as the need increases our resources are being stretched thin.

I know we cannot save the world but we can certainly try



to save the person who is right in front of us. Our programs are small -- 36 orphans, a third who are HIV+ in India; 28 starving babies in Northern Uganda; 1000 children cared for at Ma's Orphanage in Uganda; 1,000 backpacks for school children in Florida; lunches and groceries to hundreds of needy families in Gifford, Florida. In each of our programs, we do what we can to make a difference.



I am reminded of the time I was asked, "What can you do with one small program when the U.N., with all its funding, can't stop the misery of so many?" I said then, and know it now, "Perhaps it is a drop in the bucket, but for those we serve it may be the difference between life and death." Won't you help us to make that difference?



Visit our new website - [www.riverfund.org](http://www.riverfund.org)