

Former resident's dream becomes reality

by Marilyn Grantham

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On Sunday, June 1, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church (2136 Carter Ave.) will hold an African service at 9 a.m., dedicated to the memory of Beatrice Garubanda. Garubanda, who founded the Blue House orphanage in rural southwestern Uganda, was an active member of the church from when she first arrived in St. Anthony Park in 1987. The service will launch a capital campaign to raise the \$83,500 needed to build the first dormitory, to house up to 44 children, on the 8.7 acres of land Beatrice and her husband, James, purchased in 2004 for a permanent orphanage.

Beatrice and their three eldest children followed James, who came here in 1986 to study nursing. She became active at St. Matthew's, serving as Missioner to International Students, Immigrants and Refugees. Meanwhile, she earned an M.A at Luther Seminary and an M.S in home economics education at the U of M. The family lived first in university student housing and then in the Hampden Square apartments in south St. Anthony Park.

In 2001 Beatrice was able to return to Uganda for the first time to visit her family. She saw first-hand the devastation caused by AIDS and other diseases. There were already more than 1 million AIDS orphans, an estimated 200 just in Kazo, Beatrice's home parish.

Without government supported social services, orphans in Uganda are the responsibility of next of kin, but families were overwhelmed with the number of children needing care. Many were without food, shelter, clothing and medical care, as well as being unable to attend primary school.

When Beatrice returned in 2004, the situation was even worse. She bought an empty store with her own money and the Blue House orphanage became a reality, with 12 girls and a house mother. The following year, the Garubandas bought land for permanent orphanage site.

Then Beatrice died suddenly in September 2005, leaving her family, friends and church to carry on her work through Hope Multipurpose, Inc., the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization she had started.

The coffee hour following the June 1 service will feature African foods, as well as an opportunity to learn more about plans for the new orphanage. The public is invited. For more information, visit www.hopemultipurpose.org.