



Helping hand for Uzima

Three Islanders have joined forces to provide vital and much-needed help for orphaned children in Africa. Joy Mowle, Steph Hickman and Dave Stubbings raise funds for the Uzima Orphan Centre, Western Kenya.

So far they have raised enough money for the centre to build shelters, buy cows and chickens, roof a classroom and do a hydrological survey with a view to putting a borehole for water in the centre's grounds.

Joy explained: "I first came in contact with Uzima Orphan Centre when I was visiting another nearby charity in rural Western Kenya in 2010. At the time a large African charity (AMREF) had given the centre a start-up grant to support very vulnerable children in the local area with day care, giving them food and education. Every child is carefully vetted and is either an orphan, has special needs or a medical condition such as AIDS. They all live in extreme poverty.

"I visited them yearly after that,

taking small gifts of money raised, but watched each year as the orphan centre struggled to stay open and dropped from 128 children to 88. Their diet became just one meal of boiled maize each day, and more and more children had to be turned away."

A year ago Joy offered to help Uzima by trying to raise more funds. Her friend, Steph Hickman knew first hand of the poverty in Kenya from a holiday she had there and she offered to assist. Dave Stubbings agreed to become treasurer after hearing about the orphan centre. He designed a website which has been extremely useful to the project, www.uzimainourhands.org

Joy said: "We were registered as a charity on August 1 – 'Uzima in Our Hands'. Our fund raising efforts so far have included 'buy a chicken or cow for Uzima' campaign; a pub quiz; a sponsored circumnavigation of the Isle of Wight; a live gig by local young bands, supported by West Wight Sports Centre and cake sales. Many people also donated clothes, shoes

and school items that we took out to Kenya on our last visit in February.

"Victorious Life Church, Newport, has been very supportive, especially in our latest 'sponsor a child scheme' run through the website. People sign up to support Uzima by sponsoring a child at £10 a month which will bring in the regular funds. We appreciate that in the recession people are struggling, but hope most people could manage less than £2.50 a week. We have had a good response but many more children need sponsors. If we get the 100 we're aiming for it will cover the costs of running the centre and we can focus our efforts on raising money for the bore hole and a permanent building."

Joy added: "Some 99.5 per cent of our funds have been donated by Island people, and we thank them. Without everyone doing their bit we wouldn't be able to help Uzima."