

One man's calling to father the fatherless

By Carla Johnson

The Bible states that God's definition of pure religion is looking after orphans and widows in their distress. Using James 1:27 as their guide, Mathias and Jolene Mulumba are taking that simple formula of mercy to Uganda through an organization called Father to the Fatherless.

"I grew up as a missionary kid in Africa," Jolene said. "I went to college [in the U.S.] to study civil engineering, but my heart was still in Africa."

At 23, Jolene went to Uganda as an intern with Engineering Ministries International. There, she met a man with an extraordinary story.

"In 2004, I worked for three months designing and master planning orphanages, clinics and schools," she said. "Mathias was 19 at the time."

Mathias was the fifth child in a family of eight siblings.

"His parents couldn't afford to care for all of their kids, so they shipped the older ones off to live with an aunt," she said. "She had money, but Mathias was treated like a slave."

After enduring daily beatings, 10-year-old Mathias ran away and survived on the streets of Kampala by begging and going through garbage.

"He was rescued by missionaries from Europe who ran a boarding house and school," Jolene said.

The missionaries helped Mathias get sponsorships for education and got him through high school.

"On the night before he ran away from his aunt, Mathias had a dream that he was taking care of little kids in a big house," Jolene said. "A voice told him, 'This is what you are going to do for me.'"



Mathias Mulumba's calling was to provide for children in Uganda.

This dream would recur every year, breathing purpose into his heart.

Mathias' destiny was to build a safe place for Uganda's street children, where they would have food, clean water, an education and the opportunity to learn about the same God who reached out to Mathias.

Mathias and Jolene married in 2008 and together, began the work of turning a childhood vision into reality. In June 2011, Father to the Fatherless was granted 501(c)(3) status.

Through gifts and donations, a large house on 83 acres in Uganda was purchased. Jolene will be busy this summer working on the master plan for a shelter, school, church, hospital, and an apartment building for single moms and their kids.

"We aren't sure if we will stay after the project is finished," Jolene said. "We want the house to be run by nationals. The 'white influence' turns Ugandans into beggars. When a white person is around, Ugandans back down from ownership."

Kathy Cserni, 60, is secretary/treasurer for the Grand Junction headquarters of Father to the Fatherless. She caught the Mulumbas' compassion for orphans because of her own childhood experience in foster care.

Aside from the need for funding, Cserni said the organization needs committed board members and volunteers to run the office at Eighth Street and Rood Avenue.

Anyone interested in contributing to the next Father to the Fatherless fundraiser is invited to the Father's Day Run for the Fatherless at 10 a.m. June 15 at Sherwood Park's south shelter. For details, contact Mathias at 366-8191 or visit www.father2thefatherless.org.