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Granny recounts trip to Uganda

John Curry
John.curry@metroland.com

Uganda was seen from St. Thomas Anglican Church in Stittsville on Monday, March 7.

Providing this visual and verbal glimpse of the African country was Stella Val, a member of the Grassroots Grannies group

who was one of 20 from Canada who attended the National Grandmothers Gathering in Uganda last September. They had all completed an application form for the Stephen Lewis Foundation, were members of grandmothers groups in Canada and had

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Grassroots Grannies return from national gathering

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committed to giving 12 presentations about their trip to Uganda upon returning to Canada.

Stella's presentation to the members of the Anglican Church Women at St. Thomas Anglican Church in Stittsville on Monday, March 7 was one of the presentations to which she had committed herself.

The presentation included a visual presentation of a number of photographs showing different aspects of the trip. Stella added comments about the various photographs.

She explained that Uganda is a landlocked country in eastern Africa, bordered by four other countries. It is on a part of Lake Victoria and the equator runs through the Ugandan city of Kampala, although the elevation does moderate the temperature to some degree. Temperatures at the end of September when Stella was there were in the 80 degree range in the daytime.

It would rain briefly once a day.

The Stephen Lewis Foundation works with community-level organizations in 15 African countries including Uganda to combat HIV/AIDS by providing care and support to women, orphaned children, grandmothers and those living with HIV/AIDS.

The Stephen Lewis Foundation has implemented the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign in which grandmothers in Canada support the grandmothers in HIV/AIDS areas of Africa where they have become the primary caregivers for their grandchildren.

A conference of African grandmothers was held in 2010 but it was found that the diversity among the countries was too great and so national conferences were organized. It was to the Ugandan National Grandmothers Gathering that Stella went.

She said that she applied to go

to this conference as she wanted to meet the grandmothers in Africa and also wanted to find out more about the work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation in Africa.

Of course, no trip to Africa would be complete without some sightseeing and Stella did get to enjoy a short safari in the Murchison Falls National Park. Murchison Falls is a waterfall on the White Nile River in Uganda that tumbles 141 feet. The falls lends their name to the surrounding Murchison Falls National Park.

In this national park Stella saw a variety of African wildlife such as lions, crocodiles, rhinoceros, giraffes, elephants and a number of the colourful birds for which Uganda is known such as the red-throated bee-eater and the yellow billed stork. She showed photographs of some of this wildlife and birds.

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ACW GRANNIES PHOTO

Pat Dalphy, right, of the Anglican Church Women of St. Thomas Anglican Church in Stittsville, presents a donation to Stella Val, left, of the Grassroots Grannies following her presentation to the A.C.W. group at the church on Monday afternoon, March 7. Stella and Pat are surrounded by some of the craft items made by grandmothers in Africa.

Three-day event discusses economic empowerment, HIV/AIDS

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She also showed photographs of those at the grandmothers conference, a three-day event that had sessions on economic empowerment, on HIV/AIDS and its effects on the family and on security and rights. Four hundred and fifty grandmothers from Uganda attended the conference.

It was pointed out that there are 2.1 million children in Uganda who are being looked after by grandmothers due to the impact of HIV/AIDS in the country.

The grandmothers wore their tradition-

al and colourful African dresses and there was constant dancing, singing and music.

The Uganda grandmothers voiced their thanks for the homes that the Stephen Lewis Foundation is building in the country and for all that the Foundation and the grandmothers organizations in Canada and elsewhere do for them.

Stella had with her at St. Thomas Church examples of some of the crafts which the grandmothers of Uganda make such as baskets, paper jewellery and purses.

Stella also had the opportunity to visit some of the projects with which the Stephen Lewis Foundation has been involved

in Uganda.

“It was just an amazing experience,” Stella says about her trip to Uganda, while reminding everyone that the grandmothers in Uganda still need help in order to keep moving forward.

She said that everyone wants to help these grandmothers help themselves and she testified that the grandmothers are certainly doing that.

The Stephen Lewis Foundation has been involved with over 1,400 initiatives in Africa since its founding in 2003. It now partners with various organizations and groups in 15 African countries.