

Retired Geographer Improves Lives of Ghana's Impoverished Children

By Carlos Abalo
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Peter Osei-Kwame — a retired supervisory geographer from the Census Bureau's former Kansas City Regional Office — is in Ghana this month building schools, finding homes for orphans and helping children rise above the difficult conditions present in the West African country.

It's a passion of giving instilled in him nearly 70 years ago in Ankaase, Ghana, where he was taken in by his aunt after his parents died.

"My adopted parents, Hannah and Joseph, helped me out of hopelessness and poverty," Osei-Kwame said before leaving his home in Missouri to go on another trip to his native land. "They gave me good education and taught me good work ethics. They also taught me to love everyone I meet who needs my help, especially the orphans of this world who have no resources to get educated. In honor of my adopted parents, I will continue this charitable work until the day I can no longer do it."

Osei-Kwame would go on to be a geography professor at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana. When Ghana shut down its universities in 1983 for political reasons, he and his wife left for the United States. They landed first in Iowa and then went to Wisconsin, where he taught in colleges and sold insurance.

In 1994, Osei-Kwame started the Africana Children's Education Fund.

"When people are educated, they will realize that we are all living on this planet for a short time period," he said. "While we are here, we must help each other to live our lives to the fullest and to leave behind a legacy that will outlive us."

Working with U.S. adoption agencies, Osei-Kwame and his wife have found homes for 19 Ghana-born orphans. The children now live with their new families in cities from California to New Jersey.

They have also found sponsors for 45 kindergarten, primary and junior high school children in Ghana as well as six college and vocational school students who otherwise could not have afforded an education. And with the fundraising help of a school in Washington, D.C., an elementary school was built in Ghana's Ashanti region.

Two years before the 2000 Census, Osei-Kwame became a geographer in the Kansas City Regional Office. He would earn a Bronze Medal Award for his work in the development of the Address Listing and Mapping Instrument for the 2010 Census. His co-workers were more than willing to help.

"When I began to work for the Census Bureau, my colleagues supported my mission when they learned that I was an African orphan trying to help other African orphans to receive the education they desperately needed to get out of poverty," he said.

After retiring in 2008 at age 66, he now has more time to devote to his mission.

“My wife and I make two trips every year to Ghana to monitor the progress we are making at the orphanage and schools attended by our sponsored orphans,” he said. “The first trip is usually from January through the first week of March each year to review the midyear progress made by sponsored students. The second trip is usually in September and October to review the end of year progress of sponsored students and the beginning of enrollment of new students into the program. Whenever possible, we attend the graduation of sponsored high school and college students. The most memorable times during the visits is meeting these talented orphans receiving college or high school diplomas, performing at talent shows in school, and the Christmas Party we put up for them in February each year. I am excited when I see students making good progress, setting their own goals and meeting or exceeding their goals.”

Osei-Kwame said he is delighted to see the physical, academic and spiritual transformation that goes on in the lives of the Ghana’s orphan children in adoptive homes here. Those adopted dream and work toward becoming doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers, lawyers and professionals of all sorts.

For more information about the Africana Children’s Education Fund, visit www.childofafrica.org.

COMMENTS

Great story!

What an inspiring article! It's wonderful to hear about the work Peter and Anna are supporting in Ghana. Thank you.

[Christine Gambino \(CENSUS/POP FED\)](#) on 1/28/2015 9:19 AM

Re: Retired Geographer Improves Lives of Ghana’s Impoverished Children

It's wonder to see the various articles of how former Census Bureau employees are using their time during retirement. I met Peter when I was on detail to the KCRCC for the 2010 census. Peter is a wonderful and generous person. He is very passionate about helping others.

[Sherri J Norris \(CENSUS/DMD FED\)](#) on 1/28/2015 4:55 PM

Heart Warming!

Excellent inspiration to be the best person you can be! Census Bureau employees rock!

[Mary Catherine Potter \(CENSUS/MCD FED\)](#) on 1/29/2015 2:28 PM

Re: Retired Geographer Improves Lives of Ghana’s Impoverished Children

Wonderful story!

[Suzanne Marie Dorinski \(CENSUS/GOVS FED\)](#) on 1/30/2015 11:45 AM



Peter Osei-Kwame retired from the Census Bureau in 2008.



Peter Osei-Kwame and his wife (standing in the back) see first-hand the new kindergarten class they helped establish last year in Ghana.



Students celebrate the opening of a new freshwater well at their school in Ghana.