

# SCHOOL

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girl. "He was such a dynamic speaker."

Kauta explained how far the U.S. dollar goes in Africa and how much would be needed to do something like, say, build a school.

"We talked to him after Mass ... and before we knew it, we were building a school," said Nancy Berrigan.

Two years of sorting out the logistics and getting the contractors in place, the school for ninth grade through junior college, was built in a remote area of Uganda called Chelekura. It's not a village, but an area in the east African nation of Uganda, about four hours east of the country's capital, Kampala.

"It's just a blank space of land — no water, no electricity," said Paul Berrigan.

The first school in Chelekura was the shade from a large tree. The second school was under a hut made from tree limbs and a thatched roof, with no walls. The third location for the school was inside a crumbling old church, after a new one was built.

"The only things there are a church and a school," said Paul Berrigan.

The new school — named the John Paul School, after Paul and Nancy's fathers' first names — has become the center point of the rural community and it seems to be attracting more people to the area. Mud huts have popped up near the school, and there is some trading of goods and other signs that a community or village may be forming.

Hundreds of people attended the dedication in 2007, each bringing gifts for the Berrigans — including turkeys, goats, coins, eggs, fruit and more.

It was an overwhelming experience for the couple.

"They believe you have to give back of your time, talent or treasure. It was so humbling," said Nancy Berrigan.

## A SPECIAL BOND

The Berrigans didn't know the bricks and mortar would be just the beginning of an amazing and fulfilling endeavor that's reached well beyond their expectations.

"They have formed a special bond with the people of Chelekura.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

- To donate to the John Paul School, visit [www.john-paulschool.com](http://www.john-paulschool.com) for all of the details.
- All donations to this 501(c)3 nonprofit are tax deductible.
- Donations can support major projects or they can be designated to sponsor a student at \$100, includes daily lunch or \$200 for boarding students, includes three meals a day. A \$1,500 donation can sponsor a teacher for a year.
- To ensure donations reach the John Paul School, make checks to "Friends of the Catholic Diocese of Tororo Uganda," with a note stating, "For the use of John Paul School-Chelekura" and mail to: Friends of the Catholic Diocese of Tororo Uganda, c/o Monsignor John Kauta, P.O. Box 2541, Farmington Hills, MI 48333-2541. A receipt for tax purposes will be sent.
- E-mail Paul Berrigan at [bird-watcher@earthlink.net](mailto:bird-watcher@earthlink.net) for more information.

"We've been adopted into the Eteso Tribe," said Nancy Berrigan, noting her tribal name is Igoe and Paul's name is Odele, the names of Kauta's grandparents.

"He said we've become a part of Uganda's history," she added.

## JUST THE BEGINNING

Since the school was built, there is now a water system, toilet facilities and a girls dormitory, where the female students can live, and not have to walk five to seven miles to school. The Berrigans have also established a scholarship program for the students to be able to afford attending the accredited, private Catholic school. The tuition is \$100 per year or \$200 for girls who are boarding. The students go to school for as long as they can afford it, then they drop out.

The Berrigans see how much is needed in Chelekura. "That was just the beginning," said Paul Berrigan, of building the school. "Their needs are endless."

Because no one has vehicles in Chelekura, the Berrigans bought the school staff members bicycles to make the trek to work a little easier. The bicycles belong to the school, and the Berrigans encour-



Students line up each morning at the John Paul School in Chelekura, an area about four hours east of Uganda's capital city of Kampala.



The shade from this large tree was the location of the school.



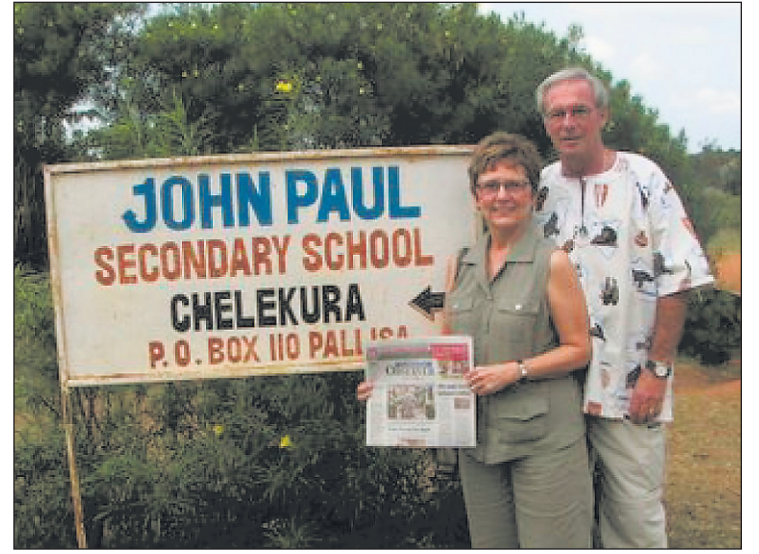
The new John Paul School, a private Catholic accredited school, has nine classrooms.

age the students to maintain them, and rent them out to others in the community. Establishing micro-businesses in Chelekura is a goal of the Berrigans.

They are currently in the midst of building a new science and library building on the John Paul School campus. It will have a biology lab, a physics lab and a

chemistry lab, a computer lab and a library. An anonymous \$5,000 donation will be used for the science lab equipment. They hope to get solar panels on the building. A Rotary club installed solar panels on the main school building.

Support is also coming from Nancy's former classmates in Kansas City, and from other friends and parishioners in



Paul and Nancy Berrigan, of Farmington Hills, brought their Farmington Observer with them on one of their trips to Chelekura in Uganda.

Michigan.

They hope the new science and library building will be completed by the time they return to Chelekura in June. The Berrigans visit Uganda once a year — most recently in November for the science and library building groundbreaking.

They know their work is far from being finished.

"The next thing we need is staff housing," said Paul Berrigan. "They all come from miles away."

When they talk about all that's happened in the last five years, they cannot believe that they've built a school in Africa.

"You forget how far you've come," said Nancy Berrigan.

"It's been a wonderful journey and we've met so many wonderful people."

Paul Berrigan is retired from Chrysler, where he was director of distribution, and Nancy is a retired registered nurse. They know that it's the right time in their lives to do this work — and they're loving it.

"It's our passion," said Nancy Berrigan. "We are connected to these people."

She said people may wonder, "Why Africa? Why not here?"

"I think everybody gets a calling," she said. "It just so happens ours was to go to Africa."

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