

## October 2014 Uplands e-Newsletter    Banner Headline ‘It Takes a Village’

### An Evening in Africa

*Contributed by Uplands resident Mary Schantz*

Peace Corps volunteers, professors, engineers, doctors, nurses, United Church of Christ and Methodist missionaries ... a surprising number of Uplands residents devoted much of their professional lives to working in Africa. Whether it was in Ghana, Angola, Togo, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Zaire, Mozambique, Zambia or South Africa, they learned first-hand what the phrase ‘it takes a village’ really means. And because they still hold a special place in their hearts for the people there, they wanted to share “An Evening in Africa” with their ‘new village’ – their friends and neighbors at Uplands Village.

But what to serve at dinner? Deidre Ellis, Uplands Director of Dining Services, worked with a resident committee to determine a menu that would be representative of the peoples of a vast continent. They decided on a fruit cup made of typical African fruits, a traditional Ghanaian dish called Groundnut Stew (with a lentil stew for vegetarians and those allergic to nuts), Sadza, a boiled ‘bread’ staple made of cornmeal (a.k.a. Iputa in Angola), boiled greens, fried plantains, and a custard pie known as Melkert in S. Africa.

“The Dining Services staff did several ‘trial runs’ until we felt we’d gotten the dishes right,” Deidre says, “but the Sadza just wasn’t working. Jeri Abbott, who worked in Zimbabwe from 1950 until 1993, finally invited me to her house to show me how to prepare it correctly!”

Jeri, who was the ‘Evening in Africa’ host, said grace in Shona, one of the languages spoken in Zimbabwe, following a traditional tusk horn blowing “call to dinner” by Dr. Bob Simpson, a surgeon who served many years in Mozambique as one of just twenty registered physicians in a country of 15 million.

The Africa committee also asked all Uplands residents who had worked in or visited Africa to share their art and artifacts at the event. The response was rewarding, a rich and varied collection of wall hangings, photos, musical instruments, including a “thumb piano” and a variety of drums, wood carvings and other artwork that were put on display for everyone to enjoy.

The committee also planned the evening’s program. Ted Braun, whose brother and parents served many years in Ghana, explained the significance of several artifacts he had on display. Robin Markham gave a slide presentation of his work in Africa. He and his wife Fran were sent by the UCC Mission Board to Zimbabwe, Zambia and Angola, where their twin daughters were born. They were given the special names reserved by Angolans just for twins.

Following several other fascinating presentations, the evening culminated in a spirited drumming performance and an enthusiastic request by Uplands residents that this be just the first of many internationally-inspired “Evening in...” dinners. So where are we headed next? China, Japan, India, Cuba, Central America, the Mideast, Turkey, Greece...? Stay tuned!