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# Some Ugandans can learn to read, thanks to UF student

## THE STUDENT STARTED A DRIVE TO STOCK UGANDAN LIBRARIES.

By **REBEKAH HUDDER**  
*Alligator Contributing Writer*

All too often, children in Uganda are forced to drop out of school around fifth grade to start working. They no longer have the opportunity to read or attend school.

Joel Hartter, a geography doctoral candidate at UF, is making an effort to improve their lives through the Foundation for Children and Education in Uganda.

Hartter joined the foundation after doing research in the east African country the past two summers. The foundation established three libraries in Uganda, and Hartter helped open a fourth during the time he was there.

He started a book drive in Gainesville on Feb. 15 to help stock the libraries' shelves.

"Anything we provide increases their standard of living on a whole," Hartter said.

While in Uganda, he talked with people in small communities outside national parks about how the formation of the parks changed their lives.

When a national park is established, people can no longer go into those boundaries and use the land, he said.

"They're all farmers," he said. "Everything they do is about the land, and restricting their use of the land really affects their lives."

Hartter and the other coordinators of the foundation thought providing a way for Ugandans to read would be a good way to educate the population who left school early.

"They need to understand what's going on outside their village and why they can't use the land in national parks," Hartter said.

Most of the funding for the program comes from private donations, but the majority of financial support comes from students, faculty and friends who give cash.

Funding is necessary because it costs \$1 for each pound of books sent. Last year, UF's department of geography raised \$600 to send as many pounds of books, Hartter said. They hope to send more.

All types of books are being accepted, but many Ugandans cannot read beyond a high-school level. Textbooks, including mathematics, nutrition, health and human hygiene, and women's health, are requested.

Hartter also asked for learning-to-read books, books with short stories, National Geographic magazines and dictionaries. Book donations can be dropped off in 3014 Turlington and at Wild Iris Books at 802 W University Ave.