



HOLIDAY GREETINGS!

DECEMBER, 2020

Dear friend of Graceworks,

I think we can agree that this has been a year like no other in recent history, and as we contemplate the upcoming holidays, there is still much uncertainty. We continue to live through the COVID-19 nightmare and have just endured an election fraught with divisiveness. To add to that, some of us, myself included, have experienced unbearable personal tragedies and loss. That said, I still believe I am blessed, and I am grateful for the life that I have. I hope you feel the same way as well.

I applaud you for your past and ongoing support for Graceworks and want you to know just how much we appreciate you. Even, and especially, during these challenging times, we at Graceworks continue to do our best to fulfill our mission of bringing hope to orphans and vulnerable children and youth, both in Kenya and here in Orange County. We remain the only safety net for many. I cannot say enough times that we simply could not do what we do without you, and I hope and pray that as you consider your holiday and end of year giving, Graceworks will be among your giving choices.

As we navigate the coming holidays and all the unknowns, I wish you and yours peace, joy and yes, even hope!

Blessings,

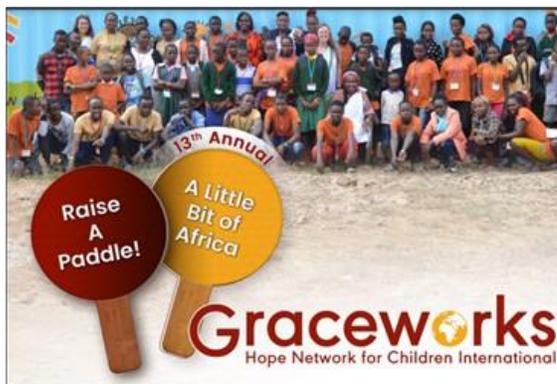
Susan Njemanze Ed. D., Graceworks Founder and President

The Graceworks Board wishes you all a very Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Kwanza, and a most **JOYOUS** and **PROSPEROUS** New Year!



OUR ANNUAL FUNDRAISER EVENT

Social Distancing to the Max!



This year, we held a “non event” fundraiser due to the COVID-19 limitations on large group gatherings. YES we missed the fun games, enticing silent auction baskets, and live auction bidding! But...we were safe! “Invitations” were sent out by snail mail and email in September. We are so happy and grateful to report that we had a wonderful response! Through your generosity, we are confident that we will be able to continue with our program activities, bringing hope and changing children’s lives, one child at a time. THANK YOU!

CHECK OUT OUR NEW AND IMPROVED WEBSITE!

If you haven’t yet visited, please go to www.graceworkshopenet.org

Program Updates

IN KENYA, AFRICA

The Kenya program helps support orphans and vulnerable children, living with grandparents or other relatives in and around the village of Rwika, in four main areas: Education, food, medical/health, and counseling/mentoring.

Education: This year, the Kenya program has supported 60 children ranging in age from 4 years to 24 years, for primary school, secondary school, technical/vocational school, college and university. All children and youth returned to school from their December holiday on January 6, 2020, and in March, all schools were ordered to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many children still remain out of school, however, those in primary school grades 4 and 8, and those in 12th grade (Form 4) in secondary school, have recently been allowed back. Technical, vocational schools, colleges and universities are also opening back up gradually.

Several supported children were able to successfully complete their education goals with the support of Graceworks. They include Caroline (24), who obtained her Secondary School teaching credential, and Shadrack (19, pictured right) who obtained his license as a “Plant Operator” to drive heavy construction machinery. Both Caroline and Shadrack have received support from Graceworks since they were in primary school and are extremely grateful for the opportunity they have been given to succeed in life.



Feeding: This has been a particularly difficult season for the children and guardians in the Kenya program. Most of our guardians are poor and elderly grandparents, and there are no reliable government programs to turn to for help. Since many of the caregivers rely on earnings from casual labor to survive day to day, COVID-19 restrictions have severely reduced income opportunities. With the children and youth now home from school, basic needs such as food have become a great hardship. Thus, Graceworks is providing additional food to the children and guardians to help supplement what the caregivers can provide.



Brian, Nice, Florence, Moreen, Purity
Receive monthly food packages.

Counseling/Mentoring: The children supported through the Kenya program receive ongoing counseling and mentoring by its dedicated staff and volunteers. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, these activities have been greatly curtailed and are now only happening on an emergency basis. We are hopeful that our children and youth will be able to take full advantage of the counseling and mentoring opportunities once the pandemic diminishes. The Kenya staff and volunteers at the program facilities in Rwika are more than ready to return to the full program, helping the orphans and vulnerable children become successful.

Health/Hygiene: Graceworks has continued to ensure that children receive medical care when needed. During this COVID-19 pandemic, Graceworks is also providing assistance with masks and other hygiene products including soap and sanitizer.

Another crucial support for the children in the area of hygiene has been the distribution of sanitary care packs for the older girls. The use of unhygienic materials for sanitary purposes during a menstrual cycle can cause infections, embarrassment, shame and anxiety to girls. This can result in poor performance and attendance in school. The program provides a package of sanitary pads and underwear to the older girls once a year - every August. This year, we had a designated gift to Graceworks to enable the purchase of sanitary packs which were then made available to our 27 young ladies who met the criteria. They expressed great gratitude for the supplies.



Girls receiving year supply of sanitary care packs

Program Updates, Continued

What's Next? Hopes and Dreams!

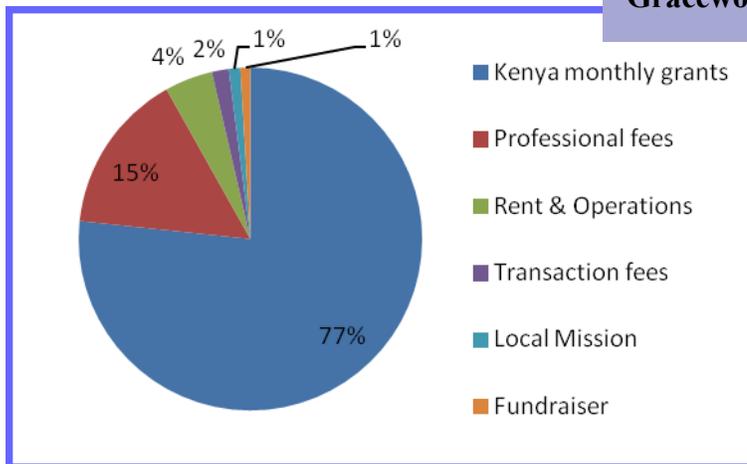
As 2021 knocks on our doors, we are hopeful that all schools will fully open early next year so that the children can continue with their education, a primary focus of our mission. Because of your faithful support and generous donations, we hope to bring some modernization to the center in the way of a computer lab, a necessary resource for our students in today's world. Along with that prospect, bids to bring electricity into the Center will be initiated and hopefully plugged in by summer. We also expect to add at least 30 children to our Kenya program, many from our long waiting list. Stay tuned and watch us grow!

IN ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Kinship Foster Care Program: Locally in Orange County, Graceworks has continued to collaborate with other entities including St. John's Lutheran Church Orange and Olive Crest, to support Kinship Foster Care families. Due to COVID-19, many in-person respite and holiday events were curtailed this year. Currently Graceworks continues to assist with gift certificates for groceries and other basic needs for identified struggling kinship care families in Orange County.

Our 2020 Income Distribution

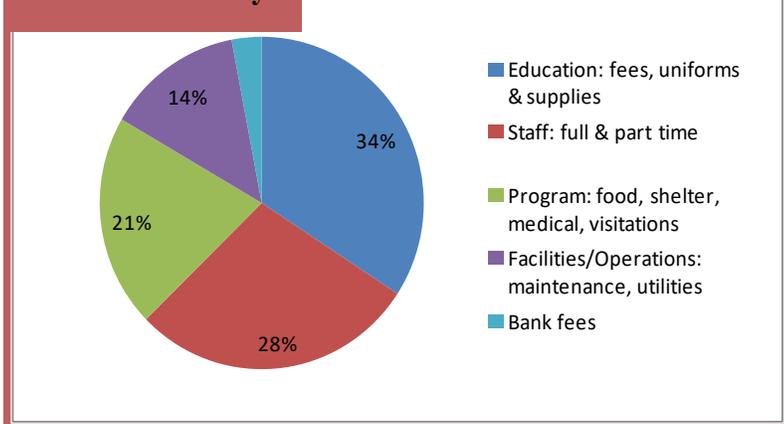
Graceworks U.S.A.



In March, Graceworks received a large designated cash gift from a loyal long-time donor to help us chart a way forward with the help of a professional consulting firm. The consultants assisted us in setting goals and implementing some needed organizational restructuring. We are truly grateful to our generous donors, and we are convinced that Graceworks is now poised to increase the impact of its programs both here in Orange County and in Kenya Africa.

Normally, the majority of the funds provided to Kenya are for the education needs of our supported children. Due to the COVID-19 crisis and schools being closed since mid March, education expenses were less. More funds were spent supporting the critical needs of the programs, especially the distribution of food. Also, it was crucial to maintain an active staff to help our children and youth through these unusually difficult times.

Graceworks Kenya



WHAT'S NEW IN GRACEWORKS, U.S.A.?

This year, Graceworks embarked on a quest to recruit additional board members to help propel the organization to the next level. We are delighted to report that we have identified seven amazing people who have graciously agreed to offer their time, talents and treasure. Blessings abound!

INTRODUCING...

Dianne and Dr. Dudley Wiest were invited to join our Board by Dr. Jay. Dianne is a retired school psychologist. Dudley is a practicing clinical psychologist. Their son is working on a PhD in psychology and their daughter is a school psychologist. They have two eight-year-old granddaughters... who are not yet psychologists. Dianne and Dudley were introduced to Graceworks by way of Graceworks events they attended. As a result, they now sponsor two children in Kenya. Dianne and Dudley have a heart for serving others and are bringing their heart and energy to serve on the Board. 

Andrea Dabrow is a long time member of St. John's Lutheran church and has known of Susan's Graceworks program for many years. Her daughter, Emily, took part in the mission trip to Kenya and her stories and photos moved Andrea to accept Susan's invitation to serve on the Board. A very, very busy volunteer both in the church and the community makes her the perfect Board member! Andrea is married to Chris and together they have three children, Emily, Jake and Kate. So glad to have you on board! 

Theresa Hines retired after serving 26 years at the California State University (CSU) Office of the Chancellor. Theresa retired from the system-wide Human Resources Administration office (responsible for serving the 23 campuses that comprise the CSU system) as Director, HR Policy & Programs and HR Systems. Ms Hines cherishes her many years served as a foster parent and sees those experiences as life-changing. Without a doubt, Theresa's personal and professional experiences will make a positive difference to the mission and goals of Graceworks. 

Michelle Levesque has done a good deal of volunteering, including substitute school nurse at St. John's. She is married to Ron and together they have three adult children and one grandchild. Being a child sponsor of a Graceworks child for many years, they took part in a mission trip to Kenya. The experience gave them a real hands on insight into what Graceworks is about. When Susan asked her to be on the Board, she felt honored to put her talent and time to help grow the Graceworks organization. 

Stephanie Van Blarcom hails from the San Francisco Bay Area and attended San Francisco State. There, she worked with at risk children in inner city schools and in a family homeless shelter. After receiving a teaching credential and masters degree, she worked in education for the last 15 years. Stephanie is married to Pastor Trevor Van Blarcom. Together they have two daughters, 11 and six months. She loves to garden, read, spend time with family and serve the local community. We know her heart and her background will be a great asset to our Board. 

Megan Gjersvold is the director of youth at St. John's Lutheran Church in Orange. She grew up in Orange with her parents and brother Andy and sister Emma. She currently lives in Old Towne Orange. Now in the midst of this pandemic, she says she can't get enough coffee, and has re-established her love of puzzles! Megan has a passion for people in need and a heart for serving. Growing up, Megan has heard many heartwarming stories about Graceworks and is excited for the opportunity to be a part of the wonderful things that they do! 

WELCOME ABOARD!