



What We Do Together

A CHERISHED SMILE: VICTOR'S STORY

The program in Kenya provides many of the necessities for a child living in dire poverty such as food and medical care. The educational opportunities we make possible are their one chance to rise above their circumstances. But what happens when, in addition, they are faced with loss, trauma, or other seemingly unsurmountable challenges? We are there too. Through home visitations program staff stay close to the children so they can respond appropriately and offer professional counseling and therapy for children in trouble.

A boy we will call Victor came to the program soon after tragedy hit the family. His mother had passed away leaving him in the care of his two older, unmarried brothers, just young adults themselves. Although already a second-year high school student, he seemed excessively shy, withdrawn, and malnourished. It was concerning that he was not compliant with his medications. The caring staff wrapped their arms around him, literally and figuratively, and still, for months, Victor would hardly utter a word. With the loving perseverance and skill of a therapist who worked with him for over a year he slowly started to emerge from a place of pain and open up to the world again. Then came a day to remember: the first time they saw him smile!

You can imagine the joy we felt when we received news a few weeks ago that Victor is now thriving. He has regained his self-esteem, his self-confidence and carries such a positive outlook toward the future. We are confident he will do well in his upcoming school exams and pursue his longtime dream of becoming a news anchor.



Children lining up for Saturday activities

There are many stories similar to Victor's, and together, we can continue to work for those emerging smiles, for their goals realized and for making the lives of the children a little more comfortable and a little more hopeful.

Season of Giving

The children of Graceworks need your help, please consider giving what you can this holiday season!

Ways to Give:

- **GENERAL FUND:** Donations provide food, medical attention, counseling, and other necessities in Kenya. Designated donations for the local mission in Orange County provide support to children in the care of relatives or the foster care system.
- **CHILD SPONSORSHIP:** Sponsoring a child ensures that Graceworks can provide consistent means of getting a child's needs met. Sponsors may have a personal relationship with the sponsored child who benefits greatly knowing that a particular person cares about them.
- **VOLUNTEER:** Provide much needed help in the Graceworks office and volunteer with our local mission Kinship activities, amongst other opportunities.

You can make a gift, sponsor a child or volunteer by visiting our website at www.graceworkshopenet.org or call Melanie at (714) 602-7197



A Message from the President

Dear friends of Graceworks,

The holidays are here again, a time when we juggle holiday parties, gift shopping, and spending time with loved ones. For some, it may also be bittersweet as we wrestle with the grief and loss of loved ones or changes in life circumstances. For me, it is a combination but above all, I try to remember how blessed I am to be living here and now, and what a privilege it is to be a part of the wonderful work of Graceworks. It is with a humble and extremely grateful heart I thank you for your support.

Since its founding in 2007, Graceworks has remained focused on its mission of bringing hope to orphans and vulnerable children by providing broad based support and educational opportunities. In Kenya, Graceworks supports a program in the rural community of Rwika that serves some of the most vulnerable children in the world by providing funding for school fees and supplies, food, medical care, and emotional support including counseling, mentoring and advocacy, for about 100 children per year. In Orange County, Graceworks collaborates with other organizations, including churches and social service agencies serving vulnerable children locally.

As the world emerges from the Covid pandemic, the effects of inflation, increased food costs, and famine in the region bring critical challenges to the Kenya program. With your support, the program continues to produce amazing success in advancing a legacy of hope.

As you enjoy time with your loved ones during this season of giving, we pray that you remember the children reached through Graceworks. We could not do what we do without you; please consider a year-end tax-deductible gift in support of our work.

I am deeply grateful for your generosity through the years. I wish you and yours a happy, healthy, and restful holiday season. Blessings,



Susan Njemanze Ed.D.,
Graceworks President

A hundred years from now, it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in or the kind of car I drove... but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.

--Forest Witcraft

Dr. Susan above with Jaiden

What is in a Take Home Package?

The children receive these much needed items monthly

- 6 kg maize flour
- 9 packets of rice with vegetable meals
- 2 kg baking flour
- 2 liters cooking oil
- 1 bar of soap
- 1 kg sugar
- 1 kg salt
- Toothpaste
- Other toiletries
- Spinach grown at the project



Success Begins Here

A PRESCHOOL DREAM REALIZED

From its inception, the Graceworks Kenya Project understood the need to build a pre-school for the children in the community that come from the most disadvantaged background. It is scientifically proven that children's brains develop the most between the tender ages of 0-5 years. Therefore they can benefit immensely from a stimulating environment in which they can grow and set a base for future learning. Perhaps even more critical at this age, is to care for their social-emotional well-being by placing them in a safe environment where they receive unconditional love and acceptance, not to mention two meals a day.

The dream of having a preschool was briefly realized in 2011. The preschool then located at Rwika town center with 12 children attending, was shut down by the government education office for inadequate outside play space. In 2017, the Kenya Program moved to a new 9-acre plot of land outside the town center with ample outside play space! In the same year, they also received a gift of a wonderful children's playground donated by St. John's Lutheran Church, in Orange, California.

Initially, the preschool plans to use a shipping container that was sent to Kenya by St. John's Lutheran church with food donations. With the funds raised at this year's September gala, we can now convert the container into a classroom filled with books, toys and pre-school furniture. Additionally, we can provide a teacher, a helper and a one-year supply of food for the youngsters. Actual preschool classrooms will be built eventually and the container will be used for other purposes. Supporters, you made this happen at our fundraising event, we are so grateful.



Sponsor a Child!

THE CYCLE OF GIVING

You can make a difference in a Kenya child's life by sponsoring! Yvonne, Dorcas, Catherine, George, Mary, Emmanuel, and Orida, are a few of the many precious children who need sponsors. A sponsorship commitment is so very important as it ensures consistent means of meeting a child's needs. An added benefit is the opportunity to have a personal relationship with a particular child in Kenya. Through letter writing exchanges, sponsors can encourage their child, celebrate their accomplishments, and learn more about their hopes and dreams. The child also learns about the person who cares about them and maybe a little about American culture first hand. If a sponsor is fortunate enough to join one of our vision trips to Kenya, you, the sponsor, and the sponsored youngster, can meet face-to-face! Current sponsors often share with us how much warmth and satisfaction the experience of sponsorship has added to their lives. We are so grateful for the generosity of our many sponsors who have committed to a sponsorship; if you are not currently a sponsor, we hope that you will consider joining this special group of Graceworks supporters and help us reach our goal of "A sponsor for every child!"



You can sponsor an elementary school child for \$50 per month (\$600 a year), or a secondary school child for \$100 per month (\$1200 a year). To sponsor a child, please visit our website at www.graceworkshopenet.org and fill out a child sponsorship form, or contact Melanie at (714) 602-7197.



Board Members: Dr. Darrell Duddley, Alison Conard, Michelle Levesque, Theresa Hines, Megan Gjersvold, Stephanie Van Blarcom, Andrea Dabrow, Dr. Susan Njemanze, Sharon Portman, Melanie Ríos Glaser (Staff-Director), and Dr. Jay Bauman

"A Little Bit of Africa"

GRACEWORKS ANNUAL GALA

Graceworks held its annual fundraising event on September 18th at The Villa in Orange. The evening included opportunities for guests to mingle over wine, to participate in an extensive silent auction, a live auction, and share a delicious dinner. The very popular "Kenya Marketplace" offered jewelry, bookmarks, sandals, kangas, and more. Adding to the excitement of the evening was the lively Fund-a-Need bidding in support of launching a new pre-school at the Kenya program. The persuasive antics of the auctioneer coupled with the kind hearts of our supporters, brought in \$41,810, exceeding our goal of \$35,000 and thus allowing us to complete the first phase of the project. We thank those of you who bought tickets and joined us, those who spread the message by bringing friends, the people who donated auction items, our volunteers, and those who were unable to attend but donated, nonetheless. New pre-schoolers in Rwika, Kenya, this community in Orange County came through for you!



Marcie Toomay

Supporter Corner

MARCIE'S HATS FOR KENYA

Marcie Toomay, who passed away on July 30th of this year, loved to knit. As one of 13 siblings raised in the Depression, she understood the need to be frugal with material things but always giving in heart. She was an active volunteer in several charities throughout her lifetime and on one such occasion was knitting caps for an organization helping homeless women. Unfortunately, the organization had to close, leaving her with extra caps. Her daughter, Michelle Levesque, and her husband, Ron, as dedicated supporters of Graceworks' mission, (Michelle is currently a Board Member), suggested donating the hats to the children in Kenya. Susan Njemanze took the hats to Kenya where they became a hit with the children. Marcie was delighted to hear this and asked Susan if they would like more. Susan's response? "Keep knitting!" Michelle describes her mom as sometimes stubborn, but with tremendous perseverance and a gift to encourage others. "Marcie's caps for Kenya," as they came to be known, send a message that care and grit can travel across continents. Keep that love coming!



Some of the children in Marcie's knitted hats