



Homes of Joy



Dear Friends of Homes of Joy,

Since our last newsletter in April 2020, we, as a community, have gone through changing seasons from the new birth of spring, to the hot and relaxing times of summer, and now we are experiencing the wonderful fall colours and changes of autumn as we prepare for the winter months ahead. During this time, we have also experienced the traditional holidays and events like Easter, Canada Day, summer holidays and Thanksgiving; but none of them were celebrated in the traditional fashions and we look forward to Christmas with excitement tempered by uneasiness.

Covid has certainly made its mark on the world in 2020, and it shows that it plans to continue until the worldwide community successfully eliminates this disease. Unfortunately, patience, understanding and diligence is what is required at this time and that is something that people tend to lose when they are scared, uncertain, and at a loss.

We, as a Board and as friends to all of you, hope and pray that you and your families are taking care of each other – reaching out, and sharing your love within your communities. Our heartfelt thanks go out to you for your ongoing support and we would like to thank all who have already donated this year whether it is via mail, Facebook, or monthly donations through Canada Helps.

We, as a Board, have also been reaching out to partners in Zambia – both Nyumba Yanga, Future in My Hands and our post-secondary girls to check in on them frequently as they deal with Covid and the challenges it presents. Although cases in Zambia continue to climb (with 16,415 cases at the time of writing), thankfully so far our girls and those who care for them have remained safe and healthy. Sister Rose (who lives at the convent at Nyumba Yanga and is a Doctor at the University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka) did contract Covid-19 in the Summer, but thankfully is fully recovered and acted quickly so that none of the other Sisters or girls were impacted.



UPDATE FROM NYUMBA YANGA

Like many other countries around the world, when Covid arrived in Zambia, the schools were closed and the girls were put on an indefinite academic break. Most of the girls at Nyumba Yanga went back to their hometowns with their extended relatives during this time (as they were formally mandated by Social Services to do so). It was during this time that we were advised that additional funds were needed to maintain the health and safety of our girls and their relatives in the local compounds. We responded quickly and were able to send over \$1200.00 USD to assist them in purchasing necessary supplies that would allow them to maintain operations in a safe manner and to assist the girls' families as needed. The funds helped to purchase basic foodstuffs for the families, as well as posters and signage for Covid-19 education, purified water and handwashing stations, material for masks, and thermometers. The Sisters at Nyumba Yanga kept in contact with the families and supported them with weekly food packages as needed (made possible in large part by those who donated to our Disaster Relief and Covid-19 Fund). Your support kept not only our girls safe, but also their relatives during a time when food prices were escalating dramatically, and supply shortages were rampant. The Sisters also worked to prepare in advance for the return of the girls and made the changes needed to continue operations in the age of Covid. The girls assisted by making door mats, necklaces/rosaries, and cards to help raise funds during this time as well as assisting in the garden at Nyumba Yanga when they visited to pick up supply packages.



For a Zambian child, school means a meal every day, as well as a chance to play with other children and most importantly, the hope of becoming independent contributors within their communities. As a result, we decided that we would continue our goal of raising funds for education for our girls despite the uncertainty of Covid. We believe education is the best gift we can give to them. Unfortunately to-date, no refunds on school fees for 2020 have been offered by any of the private schools in Zambia despite the extended closure.



SCHOOL STARTED BACK IN ZAMBIA IN SEPTEMBER. Before the girls started back to school, they received full medical checkups and the Sisters did home visits to their extended families. This is the first time that we are aware of, that visits like this have been done because of the distances and amount of time involved. However, the Sisters have told us that they were very insightful and informative. These visits will definitely help the Sisters to truly understand the unique circumstances faced by each girl, and her personal story before coming to Nyumba Yanga. We are grateful to the Sisters for taking this initiative and it is a blessing given the fact that Covid gave them the time to do this. Once the girls were back at Nyumba Yanga, they participated in a Corona Sensitization program through the Ministry of Health at the request of Dr. Rose. The girls learned a great deal and are moving forward in their school year. Sister Saleth has just sent us the budget for 2021 needs, and indicated she expects to have 35 children at Nyumba Yanga next year, 6 of whom will be newcomers.



FUTURE IN MY HANDS

Like Nyumba Yanga, our older girls at Future in My Hands also had an extended academic break but they are all now BACK AT SCHOOL. We are pleased to report that Natasha and Selita have finished their catering course and the rest of the girls are currently writing their exams for the year.

Our post-secondary students, Memory and Idah, have been continuing their studies throughout Covid (with some virtual learning and social distancing protocols in place). Idah recently completed her year-end exams and is doing well. Memory who is in her final year of nursing has been continuing her studies and writes her final exams this month. We are optimistic that she will do well and become our very first post-secondary college graduate who will officially convocate and cross the stage in Fall 2021 if all goes according to plan.

For 2021, there will be 9 girls at FIMH, including 5 new girls from local communities who have not come up through Nyumba Yanga. This is the first year FIMH has been able to accept new girls in this manner and this is an important step for the project. Idah will continue on into the final year of her Medical Officer Program and we have one other girl who is waiting on final grades but is hoping to begin Teacher's College in 2021 with our support. We would also like to introduce Sister Anne who replaced Sister Sahai as the Director at FIMH during the summer. Sister Anne has joined the Homes of Joy team with love and joy and the girls seem to have welcomed her with open arms and hearts.



Here is a picture of her receiving flowers from the girls on her birthday in October.



FUTURE PLANS

Our mission is to provide for the basic and educational needs of the girls at both Nyumba Yanga and Future in My Hands. We also have decided to continue our two 2020 Special Projects throughout 2021; our Post-Secondary Scholarship and Bursary Fund, (for exceptional girls who want to further pursue their educational aspirations), and our Disaster Relief and Covid-19 Fund, (for emergency needs as the pandemic continues). Although we have not been able to do a site visit in recent years, the Sisters at both Nyumba Yanga and Future in My Hands have been able to provide us with information necessary to know that our work is greatly appreciated and direly needed. A site visit will be done as soon as it is safe to do so, (and if at all possible for Memory's convocation).

In 2021 our focus will be prioritizing educational support at the primary, secondary and post-secondary levels, and raising funds for our two Special Projects. As always, every dollar donated goes directly to support the care and education of the girls, unless you designate it to be used otherwise (i.e. if you specify that all or part of your donation is used to support our administrative costs, site visit travel costs, or one of our 2021 Special projects). One way to do this is to participate in the Giving Tuesday 2020 campaign that is taking place on December 1st (which is also World AIDS Day making this even more meaningful for us this year knowing the girls in both projects were orphaned as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic). Some of you have made this a tradition and we appreciate your support.

GIVINGTUESDAY

December 1, 2020

You can also continue to give online at www.homesofjoy.org/donate , by cheque payable to Homes of Joy Inc. to our home base at 45 Ballantine Street, Cobourg, ON K9A 5G8, or through Facebook where we are now a registered charity and receive 100% of funds donated.



NOVEMBER 2020



Given the amount of time needed to send the money to Zambia before the January 1st deadline and the additional restrictions of Covid, we hope to have the education funds for 2021 ready to send by December 20th this year which is earlier than usual. Anything that you can contribute throughout the holiday giving season would be greatly appreciated, and tax receipts will be issued for all donations over \$20.00 at the end of the year. Please also consider passing this letter on to family or friends whom you think might be interested in our work to help us continue to grow our support base.

The year 2020 has been an interesting and challenging year and with prayers and hopefulness, 2021 will show us that through difficulties, comes strength, courage, and light to share with all. We, as a Board, hope that all our friends continue to share their love and compassion to all in our world– to our families, to our friends, to our community both at home and in Zambia and to the entire world, as we are truly better together.

We wish you a very Merry Christmas and a JOY-filled holiday season remembering always to stay safe, stay healthy, and keep supporting one another.

With gratitude,

The Homes of Joy Board of Directors

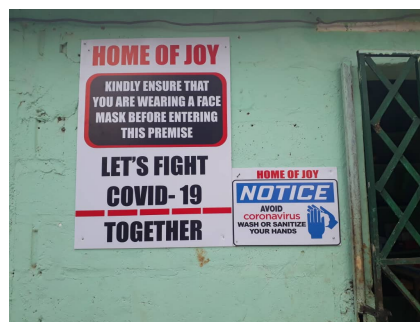
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