



**December 2019**

**Dear Friends of Homes of Joy,**

2019 is quickly drawing to a close, and 2020 will soon be upon us! 2020 promises to be a year of change and growth for Homes of Joy both domestically and internationally, and we are excited to share our updates with you. As we head into our 12<sup>th</sup> year as an organization, we are so grateful to each and every one of you for your ongoing support and the impact your generosity has made in the lives of the girls Nyumba Yanga and Future in my Hands (FIMH). To date we have raised almost \$300,000 dollars, and are now able to prioritize educational and basic needs for approximately 55 girls at the primary school and secondary school level, as well as offering support for exceptional students to pursue opportunities at the college/vocational level through our Post-Secondary Scholarship and Bursary Fund. Thank you once again for believing in the work that we do. As we prepare to launch into a whole new decade, we can't wait to see what's in store for the girls we help to support and care for!

**Project Updates:**

**Nyumba Yanga Orphanage:**

Sister Saleth is currently in the process of confirming places for girls at the Nyumba Yanga Orphanage and we will have between 35-40 girls living there and attending school at Ndabeni Private School for 2020. Overall, the younger girls continue to perform well academically, and receive extra tutoring when needed. 5 girls should be completing grade 7 (pending final marks in December) and moving over to FIMH for Grade 8 starting in January. The Nyumba Yanga Choir also continues to grow, and the girls have received opportunities to perform this year at the Irish Embassy, Bare Feet Drama & Arts Festival, services at the Marian Shrine, and at the 25<sup>th</sup> Silver Jubilee Mass for the CIC Sisters. The girls at Nyumba Yanga have also expanded their skill-based training this year, working on card and rosary making, crocheting doormats, learning local cooking skills, and helping tend to the ever-expanding fruit and vegetable crops in the Nyumba Yanga garden.

**Future In My Hands:**

Heading into 2020, we will be supporting 16 girls at Future in My Hands (provided the 5 girls currently at Nyumba Yanga successfully graduate). Having a school on the FIMH grounds has created an amazing opportunity for the girls academically and socially as they have been able to form friendships with other local children living in the Lusaka West area. Unfortunately, we just learned that on November 15<sup>th</sup> FIMH was hit by a heavy rainstorm causing significant damage to the project. Thankfully nobody was hurt. However, the roof on the school was destroyed, and one of the classrooms sustained significant damage. The water pump and fencing around the outside of the compound were also damaged during the storm. As a result, one of our Special Projects for 2020 will be to raise \$5000 to help repair the damage (specifically to the school roof and classroom). Our other update about FIMH concerns our Post-Secondary Scholarship and Bursary Fund, and we have great news to share on this front! Thanks to your support, Memory has now completed her second year at Nursing College. We are awaiting her final exam marks, but expect that she will enter into her 3<sup>rd</sup> and final year of Nursing College in January of 2020. Idah has also completed her first year in the Medical Officer Program, and we hope her exam results will also be strong so that she can move into her 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the program in January 2020. Micaela recently asked Idah how she felt about her first year of college and her reply was, "I have learned so much that I didn't know before. I've taken courses in psychology, emergency medicine, parasitology, pathology, hematology and more. Some are very challenging but I am studying hard and doing my best. I am learning how to help people which is so important to me." We are so proud of both Idah and Memory, and as a result our second Special Project for 2020 will be raising another \$4000 for our Post-Secondary Scholarship and Bursary fund. This would allow us to fund Memory's 3<sup>rd</sup> and final year of Nursing College, Idah's 2<sup>nd</sup> year in her Medical Officer Program, and help create base funding for other exceptional girls who will be ready for Post-Secondary in the next couple of years.



**Sponsorship Program Discontinuation:**

After great reflection and dialogue with the Sisters in Zambia, we have made the decision to discontinue our child sponsorship model, based on governmental policy shifts within Zambia. Though we have always been clear that funds raised for sponsorship support all of the girls equally, this is causing challenges in the changing Zambian political climate. New policies mean that if money is raised in the name of a child, the child's family has a right to those funds. As such, because our sponsorships have raised funds in particular children's names, the Sisters have begun to receive challenges from families in the local communities indicating they feel they have a right to the sponsorship funds. Furthermore, changes with the Department of Social Welfare have resulted in a push whereby children with any living relatives are not eligible to live in orphanages (whereby previously children whose relatives were not deemed fit to care were still

eligible to live within orphanages). This shift has resulted in higher turnover and transition in and out of Nyumba Yanga and FIMH which we do not feel is fair to our sponsors or the girls themselves in terms of the emotional connections between sponsor and sponsored child. Moving away from a sponsorship model for 2020 is not a decision we have made lightly, but it is the choice we feel is ethically right based on what is currently occurring in Zambia. We are reaching out to our current sponsors separately, but wanted to provide this general update. You are still absolutely able to set up automatic recurring monthly donations online to support the girls at Nyumba Yanga or FIMH or for our Special Projects. As always, running HOJ ethically and transparently is our utmost priority, and as such we feel this is the right decision at this time. We are incredibly grateful to all those who have been part of our Child Sponsorship Program over the past decade.

### **Organizational Updates:**

We extend our extreme gratitude to both Fr. Stephane Pouliot and Mary Roughton who have made the decision to resign from the Homes of Joy Board to pursue other opportunities and adventures. Both Fr. Stephane and Mary have been with the organization since its inception, and we would not be where we are today without the time, wisdom, and love they have both given to HOJ over as it has grown. Thank you both and all the best with your future endeavors! With Mary's resignation, Susan has kindly offered to have the official Homes of Joy address be her address in Cobourg (as we are incorporated in Ontario and Micaela resides in B.C).

We would also like to welcome two new faces to our Board of Directors: Amanda Visneski and Sonya Hartwig. Amanda has been a volunteer with HOJ since 2017, and is the creative mastermind behind our website (which we continue to work on building up). We are thrilled to have her join us in a more official capacity moving forward. Sonya was part of the Service Learning trip that Micaela led to Zambia in 2014, and spent a few days volunteering at Nyumba Yanga as part of her trip. She is a recent Simon Fraser University grad with a background in International Studies and Communication, and we are delighted to have her join us. Welcome and thank you Amanda and Sonya!

### **A Request for Support:**

As you can see from the updates and changes outlined above, 2020 truly is positioning us for an exciting year of growth, but also one where we are in dire need of your support. We hope that through the updates above we have demonstrated the significant impacts your support has made on the ground in Zambia. Over 131 million girls worldwide remain unable to access and attend school, and the UN General Assembly confirmed that in 2018 alone, the number of girls not in primary school worldwide actually increased by 6%. This is why continuing to prioritize education within the private sector for the girls at Nyumba Yanga and FIMH remains our top organizational priority. We humbly ask you to consider supporting Homes of Joy this holiday giving season if you have not already done so. We have not yet met our fundraising goals for 2019, and the discontinuation of our sponsorship program which historically has provided a significant portion of our sustainable funding makes our holiday fundraising campaign that much more crucial this year.

For 2020, we have decided to focus on prioritizing educational support at the Primary, and Secondary level, and raising funds for our two Special Projects outlined above. 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 for one of our 2020 Special Projects). You can donate online at [www.homesofjoy.org/donate](http://www.homesofjoy.org/donate), (or by cheque payable to Homes of Joy). **A reminder to please send donations to our new mailing address: 45 Ballantine St. Cobourg, ON, K9A 5G8.** Anything that you can contribute would be greatly appreciated, and tax receipts will be issued for all donations over \$20. Please also consider passing on this letter to family or friends whom you think might be interested in our work. Our heartfelt thanks goes out to those who have recently donated, and to all of you who have contributed to our growth and development throughout the past 11 years.



We wish you a very Merry Christmas and JOY-filled holiday season,

**The Homes of Joy Board of Directors**

**Micaela Roughton**

**Susan Visneski**

**Shaniqua Liston**

**Amanda Visneski**

**Sonya Hartwig**

**MERRY  
CHRISTMAS**