

RAY OF HOPE LEARNING CENTER UPDATE- DECEMBER 2012

“Repurposing our resources to release our potential”



When we started the Learning Center in Kawangware in 2006 it was with the goal of creating a bridge program... a bridge for the children of our clients in the HIV program from the street to the formal educational sector. Many of the children had never been in a classroom; some had been in school but had to stop because of lack of school fees. Some children were in such poor health that they could not learn. The Learning Center Program was an opportunity for children to obtain basic educational and social skills and focus on improving their health and nutrition so they could learn, thrive and grow! The program has turned out to be so much more- especially with the contributions of our teachers, countless volunteers, sponsors and groups who have truly demonstrated love and commitment to improving the lives of these children.....In many ways we have accomplished and outgrown our initial goal and a sea of change is coming our way!

At the present time, we have 24 children from the Learning Center who are sponsored to attend Primary School. The sponsored children are showing great academic growth- their performance continues to improve and many have been recognized at their schools with certificates of merit and good leadership.

Twenty-six children remain in the Learning Center; some have been with us since its inception in 2006. **Now they are ready to enter the formal sector.** Our capacity to meet their growing academic needs, in mixed classrooms with two teachers and our physical space has reached its limit. Over the past few weeks I have had a chance to discuss the options for the Learning Center with the Board of Directors and we have come up with a plan that will allow the children to continue their education, engage volunteers in a more structured program and keep the "family" together.

Below is the plan we have outlined-

The Learning Center as it exists now will close at the end of the school term in early December with the goal of integrating the children into schools where their growth can be matched with increased academic opportunity. With funding from private donors and an aggressive fundraising campaign focused on finding new sponsors (we only need 26!) we will transition all of the children to local schools.

The 26 children who now attend the Learning Center Program will receive a formal independent academic and social assessment. This information will be used to determine their best placement in the formal sector- local schools in the Kawangware area and boarding schools within Kenya.

We will open and staff a Ray of Hope administrative office in Kawangware. Staff in this office will be responsible for coordinating the sponsorship program, interacting with parents, creating structured volunteer opportunities and enrichment programming for the children. The new office will also coordinate a "Saturday

Academy"- a weekly "check in" where the children can access health care, a hot meal, tutoring, and computer instruction AND keep the connection that they have had with one another over the years.

For the school breaks in April and August we will create and manage an enrichment camp. I imagine that many of the activities will be similar to the enrichment programming that groups like Glide Church have provided on past trips (photo journalism, self exploration, reading, computer technology, soccer and sports). We have reached out to several of our contacts in the educational field in Kenya- soliciting volunteers, student teachers and others who can help us with the enrichment curriculum for the kids. We will also be recruiting volunteers for this programming.

Our program at the LC could never have succeeded without the perseverance, dedication and commitment of our two teachers, Evelyn and Alfred. They both plan to pursue further educational opportunities. Even if they are not employed at the Learning Center we want to find ways to keep them engaged in their relationship with the children as role models and mentors.

While there will be challenges as we implement these changes, we are confident that these improvements will result in a stronger program with increased accountability and improved communication. Most importantly we are committed to the children who have filled our hearts and minds with joy and love. It is to them that we are most beholden and we are committed to seeing them to the other side of the bridge- into a life of possibilities through education. We can do this with your help!

Your past support has helped us to accomplish and meet our original goals. THANK YOU. We welcome you to join us in the next leg of this journey. We only need 26 new sponsors for these eager and now qualified children to further their education- we cannot deny their dreams! A full sponsorship for a primary school child is \$600/year. A full sponsorship for a high school student is \$1,000/year. (We have 6 who will finish primary school this year). We supplement the sponsorship funding from our general fund to cover administrative expenses, enrichment activities and transport costs. Every dollar is important to us- whether you contribute to the general fund or choose to sponsor a child, your tax deductible contribution is needed and deeply appreciated.

All my best,

Teresa F Gipson MD, MPH

Founder and Executive Director

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