

Annual Report

Assistance to the Mother of Mercy Girls Secondary School and Village in Lare, Kenya



August 2014 – June 2015

Mercy Center Foundation, USA

Message from Sr. Rose

This 2014-2015 year has seen tremendous growth in the Mother of Mercy Girls School in Lare, Kenya. Enrollment grew from 28 to 350 students in four years. There is very real interest developing in the Lare community to educate girls and the administration received over 150 new applications for the school year of which only 94 could be accepted making it the largest incoming freshman class. The school is now accommodating 350 students for its freshman, sophomore, junior and senior level classes.

I am also pleased to report that this last year, all 27 senior level girls qualified to attend the University level. This clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of the teaching program and the quality and seriousness that our girls are now approaching their studies with each day. The Mother of Mercy Girls Secondary School was ranked 4th overall in the Njoro District which is also a remarkable achievement, considering that the school was only founded four years ago and many of the other schools have been in existence for more than fifty years. The Mother of Mercy Girls School is proud of its early achievements and has a gifted and wonderful staff that is working to develop and upgrade the school's learning tools.

We remain concerned about the situation in Kenya today as there is a feeling among my people that this is a fragile state, that has experienced renewed terrorist threats and serious setbacks which have the potential to threaten the success of Kenya's government and record of economic growth and development for its people. The Mother of Mercy Girls Secondary School stands ready to protect and safeguard the right of every girl to learn and to go to school. A universal right to education is our foundation and we are pursuing our rights, one classroom at a time, one pen, one book and one girl at a time and we are changing the future for girls in rural Kenya today.

I will never be able to thank you enough for all of the support you have shown the Mercy Project over these past years and the love and friendship that you demonstrate for the community in Lare, Kenya.

With my deepest thanks and prayers for your continued support in the years to come,



Sr. Rose Wangui, VHM

Founder, Mercy Center Foundation, USA

Summary

The Mercy Center Foundation, USA seeks to provide the Lare community in Kenya with international, humanitarian and technical assistance to support access to clean water, a basic health care clinic and a girl's secondary school which assists more than 350 girls to attain a high school education. The work of the mercy project directly impacts the lives of villagers and has dramatically improved their future opportunities for a better life. Previously excluded from going to school, more than 350 girls (ages 14-18) are getting up to go to school and learn and they have the prospect of college in their futures. They can dream about becoming doctors, lawyers, scientists and business leaders for a new Kenya. They are building solid foundations for peace, stability and a strong Kenyan democracy where citizens share equally in these universal rights and work to protect them for all.

The Mother of Mercy Girls School has ten full time teachers, and three security guards, three cooks, a nurse for the clinic, a driver, two farm hands, a secretary and Director of the School. This year, a part time development coordinator in Kenya has been employed by the school directly to connect to local NGOs and to access more local grants in Kenya.

Report on Project Activities

This year our activities focused heavily on raising funds to support the building and completion of the classrooms for the Mother of Mercy School. We did raise funds to complete the classrooms which now hold all students.

A major focus on fundraising from private grants and individual donors as well as through social media and on line began this year. The Mercy Center Foundation is proud to report that more than 166 runners joined us for what is now the annual Mercy 5k Race for Girls Education in Kenya held each year in the spring at Fletcher's Cove on the canal in Georgetown, D.C. The race has grown and attracts new supporters, runners and citizens from all over the area. We were so pleased to have the School of Rock in Vienna, Virginia this year who provided fantastic music and songs that brought the whole race to life and offered much entertainment afterwards!

The Mercy Center Foundation, USA is working in partnership with A World at School and supported the worldwide campaign to gather signatures to support girls' education around the world. We joined A World at School's campaign in spring 2015 in order to expand the support for the worldwide petition to the U.N. calling for support for girls' education and education for all by gathering signatures and supporters from the Mercy 5k race and from all of Sister Rose's supporters.

And, here are the projects we also directly supported in Kenya as a result of our fundraising this past year.....



1. **New Classrooms.** This year, the Mercy Center Foundation focused its support on assisting the Mother of Mercy Girls School to expand and build two classrooms with support from individual donors and the proceeds from the second annual Mercy 5k race held in Georgetown, D.C. Additionally, the Mercy Center Foundation received grants from the Stephen and Mary Birch Foundation and from a Mission appeal that helped to support the project. Classroom construction began last February and continued through July 2015 when the last classroom was completed. Constructed of quarry stones and steel with solid roofing, the new classes remain cooler in extreme heat and enable the students to have a comfortable learning environment.

In addition to the classrooms, construction of outdoor toilets is now in the final process of being completed for students. Basic rudimentary and very rural learning environments are being transformed.



2. **Front Gate.** In order to protect the school and provide a welcoming entrance to those coming to school, a secure front gate was constructed. Security guards protect the school from intruders and ensure that rules and safety precautions are taken.



Mercy Girls in newer classroom.

In June, 2015, The Mercy Center Foundation, USA assisted recent Georgetown University graduate Collin Liebold in his two week assessment program to Lare, Kenya. Collin majored in Global Health and was also a student athlete on Georgetown University's track team. His interest in marathon running and training also brought him to Kenya where he had an opportunity to reach out to share his training techniques with the Mother of Mercy Girls Secondary School student athletes. The Mother of Mercy team advanced competitively nationwide in Kenya this year and is building great new enthusiasm around the girls' track team. A 2015 video posted by Collin on his trip to Lare, Kenya can be found here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KY7B8fO8H2s>. With support from students on Georgetown's track team and the Potomac River Running Co., running shoes, shorts and small items were sent over with Collin to assist the team in formation in Kenya. Collin has also set up a website about his visit and is raising funds to support the girls track team in Kenya.

The Mercy Center Foundation, USA is continuing to encourage student exchange and volunteer programs and graduate level internships in global health and other areas. Collin also visited Eldorat and the famous training grounds for the Kenyan marathon athletes. He had a chance to observe the classes with the Mercy girls and spent time talking with them about track life in the U.S., his interest in Africa and advancing global health programs there. The Mercy Center expresses its gratitude to Collin Liebold for his visit and looks forward to promoting future exchanges with new students each year.



- 3. Water Harvesting.** Water harvesting is a practice that allows the rain water and well water used for girls' showers to be cleaned and reused for watering the gardens. Since water remains in short supply, this technology helps the school to carefully safeguard and protect water usage. The Conrad Hilton Fund for Religious Sisters provided a grant to the Mercy Center Foundation, USA to purchase pipes and water tanks that hold and channel collected rain water for use in the school. This was very necessary in order to try to accommodate the growing number of girls and water needs and to provide water for the expanded agriculture and crops needed to feed all of the school students.

Unanticipated problems with the water well and pump in Lare required repairs this year. A new pump for the existing the water well originally built in 2003, needed to be resurfaced and this required significant costs since the well is 272m deep. During these repairs, water was brought in from Nakuru to the Lare village which resulted in unanticipated costs during a two-month period it took to complete the well re-building and repairs.



- 4. Agricultural Project.** This year the Mercy Center provided support for the purchase 150 avocado trees. The avocado trees are part of a new project to develop crops that will help to support the agro-business initiatives of the Mercy Center, Lare. The avocado trees grow well in the climate in Kenya and will assist in starting a new initiative in which 500 trees will be planted and harvested. The avocado cooperative planned will help generate income from the sale of avocados on the local and international markets, allowing the Mother of Mercy Girls Secondary School to contribute to paying teacher and support staff salaries for the school. It estimated that the trees will take 2 ½ years for them to mature from seedlings to mature trees bearing fruit. A farm manager, Simon Mwaura, has responsibility for overseeing the care and growth of this project and ensures that the trees remain healthy.

The Mercy Center Foundation, USA submitted a grant for a piggery project to the Hilton Fund for Religious Sisters. If the grant is approved in 2015, it will be implemented during the next fiscal year. This project would support pig farming and marketing of pork to local supermarkets and butchers.

Financial Report

The Mercy Center Foundation, USA undergoes financial reviews or audits each year and continues to be an organization in good standing. The board meets regularly to address the ongoing issues and projects as well as fundraising plans of the Foundation. Our financial statements for the period ending July 2015 can be found on our website under the Donate Button.

Looking forward to 2016-2017

The Mercy Center Foundation has accomplished much in this past year, and we continue to try to respond to the most critical needs arising in Kenya. For the next fiscal year, we really want to connect the Mercy Girls School to the outside world with internet, a computer lab and a library-- providing a new space to read and study after school as well as to connect to the world at large. Although our basic eleven classrooms have been completed, plans have been developed to build five proper dormitories in the coming years, for sleeping and to provide decent showers and baths for student dorms. Additionally, a good athletic field for competition is planned for summer 2016 with proceeds from the 2016 Mercy 5k race.

We will seek to improve and advance the school's plan to become self-sustainable over the long term, by providing support for micro-enterprise programs focused on agro-business farming and skills training. These programs will help support their independence and strengthen their ability to support their own administrative budget and school programs. Although this will take some time, it is a long range goal of the overall project.

We also welcome your ideas and volunteer service and support for our fundraising efforts. The Mercy Center Foundation, USA has a volunteer board that meets regularly to provide support to the Mercy Project in Lare, Kenya. We thank Georgetown Visitation for its special help with this project including the Haruma Club and all those who demonstrate their interest and support.

Thank you for standing up for girls in Kenya and for sharing this project with your friends, family and colleagues. Let's go forward!

Mercy Center Foundation, USA

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Please visit us at www.mercyproject.org

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