

Dear Sponsor:

I recently returned from a visit to Ethiopia where I had the opportunity to review and monitor Wide Horizons For Children's child sponsorship program and other humanitarian aid initiatives. I want to share with all of you who make our work possible more details about the tremendous impact sponsorship is having not only on the health and well-being of children, but also to help entire families out of the poverty cycle.

In the summer of 2008, WHFC expanded our successful Family Empowerment pilot program to sponsored families country-wide. Family Empowerment was designed to help families start small businesses. This program had been piloted in one region (the Adwa region) previously and was so successful at helping families start successful businesses that we wanted to see how it would work in other regions. I am thrilled with the progress being made!

In just one year's time, more than 125 families from Sidama and Mekelle (in addition to the 230 families already engaged in small businesses in Adwa), who previously had very little income of their own, started new small businesses. Businesses included livestock rearing, small bee farms, convenience stores, renting out rooms, tea stands, and much more. One of my favorite businesses that I had the opportunity to see was started by Agana Kankaso of Shebedino (southern region). Agana worked as a farmer prior to joining sponsorship, but in this work he did not earn enough to feed his wife and five children, let alone send them to school. WHFC staff found out about this family's situation 18 months ago and enrolled Agana's son Tadeli in sponsorship. From the sponsorship stipend, Agana saved enough money to provide for the needs of his family and also to buy a digital camera. He worked at a local photo shop for a short time to learn the photography trade before starting his own business. Today he is a successful photographer, often hired to cover weddings and other special events. He nets about 300 birr each month from his photography business alone (about 30 USD, a substantial sum in Ethiopia). He continues to save in hopes that he can build his own shop and further expand his business. His children are going to school, and Tadeli, the sponsored child, is able to help him read the camera instructions written in English.

By sponsoring a child, you provide an entry point for helping an entire family. The funds for child sponsorship are initially used to cover the basic needs of the child and family including education, food, clothing, and shelter. As the family becomes financially and emotionally stronger, a trained economist teaches them how to start saving a portion of the monthly sponsorship stipend and to look into a business they can be successful at. Once the family has saved a large enough lump sum, they make an initial investment into their business (such as buying a cow, or, in Agana's case, buying a digital camera). WHFC economists and social workers continue to work with the family to ensure that basic needs are met, earnings are increasing, that the business grows, and also that the sponsored child and the entire family have strong emotional well-being. Our premise is that full self-reliance cannot be attained without strong emotional and financial health.

Families who have reached a point that their business is self-sustaining and covers their needs are "graduated" from the program. This past summer, 108 children enrolled in sponsorship reached the "graduation" phase. Upon graduation, each family received a small grant to further grow or even double their business (the amount of the grant varied by family depending on need). The "grant terms" range from 6 months to 3 years, during which time the family will continue to receive counseling and financial advice through the child sponsorship program, but the monthly stipend is replaced by the one-time grant. At the conclusion of the grant term, families will be further assessed to ascertain if they are ready to be fully self-reliant from the program or if they would benefit from further support in terms of a small micro-loan.

Together we change lives.

Sponsors will receive an annual update and letter from the child they sponsor, whether or not the child has “graduated” from the initial program phase. Updates through WHFC will only stop once the “grant term” has been completed and the family is declared fully independent from our work. Even then, sponsors who wish to continue to correspond with the child may do so through WHFC, though we cannot guarantee a response from the child.

In general, updates are sent out to families in early autumn of each year. The annual letter, which used to be sent out during the holiday season, will be sent out to all sponsors in early spring. The purpose of this change is to evenly space correspondence and to encourage sponsored children to write letters based on their interests and daily life rather than a brief holiday greeting. We hope this format provides all of our sponsors with a stronger connection with their sponsored child.

The family empowerment program is in its initial stages and not all families have begun a small business. Over the coming 1-2 years we expect the majority of sponsored families to engage in their own thriving businesses. However, an estimated 10% of guardians may have circumstances that prevent them from starting a business (e.g. due to age or disability). These families will continue to receive the sponsorship stipend in its traditional form, including support from both the economists and social workers to aid them in saving and managing their cash flow. In general, sponsors can anticipate that their sponsored child will be enrolled in the program for three years before graduation and then an additional 1-2 years post-graduation during which time they will receive a grant or micro-loan.

In our other Ethiopian aid work, I am pleased to inform you that the Adwa Clinic that we have been constructing in the north is nearing completion. We need approximately \$40,000 more to complete the project and anticipate an opening in early spring. The Leku Hospital in Shebedino is being constructed according to plan. The framing for the first floor is complete. WHFC is looking for major gifts to help us in raising an additional \$250,000 to make this hospital a reality. Some of you may be aware of our quarterly medical missions to hospitals in Ethiopia. We have successfully completed three missions and have others scheduled in February and May. We encourage interested doctors and other healthcare professionals to apply to accompany us on one of these missions. For more information about our medical missions please visit: <http://www.whfc.org/WHFFC/projects/MedicalMission.htm>.

While we are thrilled to provide sponsorships to nearly 1,000 children and their families, there continue to be thousands more in Ethiopia who are in desperate need of the program. We are looking for additional sponsors to help grow our program. We would love to hear from you on what compelled you to join the program as well as your suggestions on how we can further improve the program. Your comments through this survey <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GBV6BFV> will be much appreciated and invaluable. The survey takes approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or the sponsorship team with any questions.

Sincerely,



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