



SOWHOPE NEWSLETTER

"Where there is despair, let me sow hope." - Francis of Assisi

MISSION STATEMENT: "TO INSPIRE WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD BY PROMOTING WELLNESS, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES."

Fall 2008

Volume 3, Issue 3

Computers in Africa

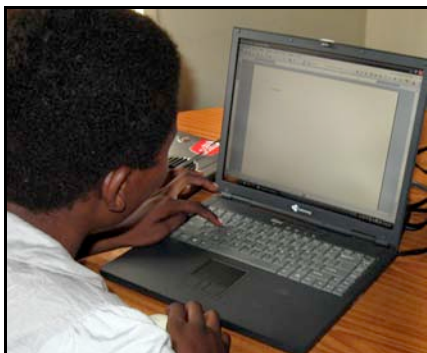
"An uneducated woman in Africa is like a soccer ball --- just something to kick around," says the president of the board of the women's shelter and maternity home in Zambia run by Silent Voices. He knows all too well that unless the young pregnant women and single mothers are helped, they cannot survive, nor care for their children. The goal of the shelter is to provide these young women with an education, vocational and life skills training, and small business practices, followed by assistance in obtaining employment making them self-supporting and independent.

SowHope was able to partner with the shelter after being contacted by a local church group planning a short-term mission trip to Africa. The local group was looking for donated computers to bring with them to Africa when International Aid staff directed Betsy Verwys to call Doug Brown, co-founder of SowHope and computer network engineer. Doug had recently received used notebook computers from a regular SowHope donor and was quick to see the possibility of helping these African women, offering them the opportunity to achieve their dreams.



Refurbished laptops in Zambia, providing new opportunities

Would you like to help women in Africa and majority world nations, where women make less than \$2 per day, become more than a "soccer ball"? You can make their dreams achievable! If you would like to help, please send your tax-deductible donation to SowHope.



Linda, who finished number one in her class gratefully types her first keystrokes.

The first words she typed, "Thank you for the computers."

Three refurbished computers provided by SowHope are now the means for eight young women, ages 12 to 19, to receive computer training. This will lead to their government certification and employability, using their computer skills in various forms of business. Computers are the means for attaining an education and unlocking dreams for these women and their children in the future. One young woman commented that she is seeing how education empowers people and expressed her desire to be a part of that solution; her dream is to help others by being a good teacher.

Hosted Event Fundraiser

Successfully launched in May 2008, Hosted Event Fundraisers are held in homes, restaurants or other venues. Whether for a wine and cheese gathering, a breakfast, or appetizers, hosts invite interested guests and provide refreshments then Mary Dailey Brown, Founder and CEO, gives guests an opportunity to become SowHope financial partners. You can help by scheduling your own Hosted Event Fundraiser. Contact SowHope at info@sowhope.org or call 616-433-1575.

Nigerian Projects Initiated

SowHope has awarded grants totaling \$3,000 to four new projects in Nigeria. The projects are a combination of vocational training and micro-loans that will change the lives of 30 women. In addition to training in marketing and basic business practices, participants may elect to learn knitting and sewing, poultry farming, or soap production. Women who successfully complete the vocational training will receive a micro-loan enabling them to establish their own business and significantly increase their family income.

Sex Trafficking – One Woman's Story

"I listened to her story, but it wasn't until the next morning that it hit me. I just broke down and wept," said Mary Brown. She had conversed with a woman named Ruth from Sierra Leone, Africa, who was in the U.S. to testify before Congress regarding her experience of being trafficked in the sex slave industry.



Ruth K. and Mary Dailey Brown

Ruth was the only girl in her village to obtain a formal education and her ordeal in the illicit sex industry began shortly after her high school graduation. She wanted to go to college but when her boyfriend didn't their relationship ended. Heartbroken, Ruth poured out her story to the neighbor woman who offered a seemingly compassionate, listening ear. The neighbor that she had known three years was about to leave for a trip to Liberia and she urged the young girl to come with her. She assured her that her wealthy host would welcome her to his large estate. Advising her to get her passport, but not to have her own name put on the passport, "for safety reasons", Ruth did as suggested.

The following day, a man came to escort them to his estate in Liberia. Two other young girls also accompanied them. As the entourage neared the border, the neighbor woman exclaimed in dismay that while she had the travel documents for the three young women, she had forgotten her own and would have to return home to get them. The group agreed to go on and wait for her at a hotel near the border. When the woman did not arrive at the hotel, the man suggested that they continue on to his home and meet the woman there. They agreed and crossed the border into Liberia.

Upon arriving at the man's compound, gates closed behind their vehicle and the young girls were each shown to their own room. Later, her "host" came to her room and demanded sex. She was terrified, shocked and confused. Her host mockingly said, "You don't get it do you? I just bought you from your neighbor." And so began her ordeal...

She was held captive in her room. Armed guards insured that she did not leave the grounds. Her "host" was her captor while man after man used her for his pleasure. One evening a man from Sierra Leone was brought to her and thought she was someone he knew. Though he had paid for sex, he only talked with her, discovering that he grew up not far from where she did. The man came again and again. Each time, he paid for sex but merely talked. On his third visit, he asked her if she wanted

to leave. By that time, Ruth had given up all hope of escape. She explained that it was impossible because of the guards. He said the next time he would come she should do whatever her captors told her. When he returned, the guards came and told her to go outside naked. She obeyed. The man from her country met her, covering her with his coat. He then walked her out of the compound, past the guards whom she suspected he had bribed into silence.

Eventually her rescuer took her as his wife and they had a son. When war broke out, it forced them to separate. She returned with their son to Sierra Leone while he remained in Liberia. When she returned to her hometown with a son and no husband, gossip of her being unwed resulted in her being ostracized, which made supporting herself and her son extremely difficult. When war broke out again, this time in Sierra Leone, she fled with her son to a refugee camp in Guyana. It was there that she met an American missionary that hired her as an employee. Her employer was involved in helping trafficked women and after some time, discovered that Ruth had been trafficked. Recently the two of them came to the U.S. so that Ruth could testify before Congress about how she was tricked and then trafficked into the sex slave industry.

Wheels Grinding in Kenya

Another project recently funded by SowHope will benefit 40 women, many with AIDS, and the 104 orphaned and vulnerable children for whom they care, in Kenya. The project provides for the purchase of a grain mill, which will be operated by the women. The mill will provide two kinds of support for the women and their children: nutritious flour for personal consumption and profits from selling the grain at local markets.

SowHope works to inspire, educate and empower the world's most vulnerable women. Over **4,000** women in six countries have been impacted since we began in 2006.



Donations: SowHope, P.O. Box 234, Rockford, MI 49341

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Dr. Diana Sharp - Chairperson
Doreen Mangrum - Vice Chairperson
Bonnie Conley - Secretary

David Crawford - Treasurer
Dr. Timothy Beals
Chandra Colley

Jean Graham
Dr. Virginia Hodgkinson
Ainur Nurtay

Dr. Pamela Ogor
Diane W. Powers
Honorable Thomas Pearce

PRESIDENT & CEO: Mary Dailey Brown