



Sharing Opportunities with Women NEWSLETTER



Josephine, a local leader in Kenya.

16,806 AND COUNTING

Josephine is one of the many dedicated local partners SowHope supports. She is an exemplary leader and has facilitated many micro-finance and transformational development opportunities in Kenya, a country where SowHope projects, funded with your donations, have benefited more than

16,800 women. Her work and commitment to empowering marginalized women through education and economic opportunities has improved thousands of women's lives economically, socially, and intellectually.

Josephine's projects are held in severely impoverished areas, where she reports many women are malnourished because their daily meal is a diluted broth of green grams (lentils) served with ugali (cornmeal mush). Many women are idle because the culture does not recommend women to work, except to give birth, and often girls as young as twelve are married. "They live desperate lives that only worsen when they are widowed," she explains. "These cultural beliefs bind them to poverty."

Because Josephine, a gifted and wise Kenyan, knows her culture and the societal norms very well, she is able to empower women with transformational development principles that greatly advance the role of women. Amazingly, because of her humble yet authoritative teaching style, the enlightened local chiefs and men in leadership who attend her conferences also happily embrace the principles. This causes a significant positive cultural shift in the way women are treated when they return to their villages.

Thank you for supporting those who are often forgotten.

The impoverished women who gain hope, inspiration, and health through SowHope-funded projects are among the populations typically forgotten during times of global crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Know that SowHope continues to receive applications for new projects to fund in 2020. The staff and the Board of Directors are committed to continuing operations, in spite of the restrictions now put in place.

Thank you for your continued support of SowHope, which allows us to provide hope and inspiration to women and their children worldwide.



A young Egyptian woman concentrates on learning a new skill.

SOWHOPE
EXISTS
TO INSPIRE
WOMEN AROUND
THE WORLD
BY PROMOTING
WELLNESS,
EDUCATION, AND
ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITIES

AN OASIS IN EGYPT

Twenty-five impoverished women, most of them widows, learned how to make leather bags and wallets at a SowHope-funded project in Egypt. Our partner, Bassem, reported that in addition to attaining financial independence, the women also became more social and loving, their personalities improved, and there was no jealousy between them. He said they worked cooperatively in spite of cultural and religious differences, and it was inspiring to witness the bridge of friendship they built.

This positive feedback reflects the impact the six projects SowHope has funded in Egypt have had on many of the 7,689 women who have participated. Another example of the sustainable growth that happens when women learn a skill is a group of five women from a poor area in Cairo that attended a sewing course at a training center. After they received advanced training in sewing, they opened a shop and "produced 300 pieces of clothing to distribute to poor people," Bassem shared. Their work is a testament that when women gain hope and inspiration, children and communities will also benefit.

In 2020, SowHope will continue its partnership with Bassem by funding a ten-day comprehensive development course for sixty young women from Upper Egypt. The women will receive vocational training in either hairdressing or sewing so they can earn a living, and they will also receive emotional and social support to equip them in their lives while being agents of change for others in their communities.

SAVE THE DATE!

SowHope's 6th Annual Fundraising Gala
Thursday, September 24, 2020, 6:30 PM
PINNACLE CENTER, HUDSONVILLE, MI

*For information on sponsorship opportunities,
please contact Aaron Hoxworth:
aaron@sowhope.org | 616-433-1575*

VOLUNTEER, DIANE CISLER



Diane Cisler prepares another delicious meal for SowHope's Board of Directors.

Diane Cisler believes “we all have an inherent responsibility to make this a better world.” To that end, she volunteers her time to a variety of causes—SowHope being at the top of her list. A self-described “consummate foodie,” Diane has hosted several of SowHope’s Board of Directors’ retreats—opening her home and kitchen to these annual day-long events.

Born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Diane has lived in the small Midwestern city most of her life, and it is also where she raised her two wonderful sons.

Before retiring, she worked at NPR and PBS for many years. While employed at these national organizations, Diane raised funds and hosted events where she was able to meet many of NPR’s news correspondents. “As intriguing as the news was, working behind the scenes and getting to know the reporters was even more interesting!” she said.

In retirement, Diane enjoys traveling, cooking, hiking, reading, playing pickleball, mindful meditation, eating constantly, and spending time with family and friends. Her travels include monthly trips to Philadelphia, where she visits her children and two grandchildren. Diane also likes to attend lectures and presentations on current affairs, social justice, environmental issues, and history.

After working for nonprofits her entire professional career, Diane finds SowHope’s strategy to be powerful and effective. She acknowledges the hope and change that SowHope-funded projects inspire in women individually—and the powerful ripple effect that flows from these women to their families and communities. Not only do the women achieve new goals and create new destinies for themselves—their children also benefit from the newfound income by being able to attain education. Diane considers the wellness projects that SowHope funds to be especially important because “it is impossible for someone to reach their education and economic goals if they are not healthy.”

For anyone who wants to make a mark by changing the world one person at a time, Diane believes SowHope is where you should direct your time, talent, and treasures. Thank you, Diane.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2020

SowHope celebrated International Women’s Day by offering a public screening of Disney’s *Queen of Katwe* on March 8. Although it was a beautiful spring day—the sunniest and warmest to date in Grand Rapids, Michigan—more than 160 people supported women by attending the event. *Queen of Katwe* is about the struggles a widowed mother and her children living in the slum of Katwe in Kampala, Uganda, must endure. Based on the raves from people afterward, *Queen of Katwe*’s inspiring message of hope resonated with all attendees, regardless of their age.



(l to r): Averie Fitzjohn, Mita Fitzjohn, and Emily Mace welcomed people who came to watch Queen of Katwe. (Photo by Alex Comben Photographer)

Following the movie, people were treated to a panel discussion that featured Rebecca Deng, author of her memoir titled *What They Meant for Evil*; and Fridah Kanini, one of SowHope’s Board of Directors and a businesswoman who was born and raised in Kenya by a single mother (see our Winter 2020 newsletter). Rebecca is one of the Lost Girls of Sudan who was relocated to Michigan as a fifteen-year-old orphan. Both women discussed their childhoods and how the movie accurately portrayed



Bly Bylsma (l) and Olivia Geiger (r) helped at the registration desk for International Women’s Day. (Photo by Alex Comben Photographer)

life in a refugee camp—especially the mother’s devotion to her children. Like Phiona, the main character in the movie, Rebecca’s life changed when a caring adult noticed her resolve to get an education.

Thank you to the wonderful volunteers and supporters who made our 2020 International Women’s Day celebration a success.

“We can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful.”

— MOTHER TERESA

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION MONTH

April is National Volunteer Appreciation Month and the SowHope staff wants to thank and acknowledge everyone who gives of their time and talent throughout the year. Regardless of how small or insignificant you might think the gift of you is, know that we appreciate you! The power and growth of SowHope is a testament to your help.

Honor a Woman in Your Life Brunch

Sunday, May 3, 2020 / 11 AM to 1 PM

JW Marriott in Grand Rapids, Michigan

\$100 per ticket / www.sowhope.org/brunch

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