



# AWEF

AFRICAN  
WOMEN'S  
EDUCATION  
FUND

AUTUMN, 2021

*In 2020 we were able to offer full scholarships to more than 100 girls. THANK YOU ALL!*

**“IF YOU  
EDUCATE A  
WOMAN,  
YOU EDUCATE  
A NATION.”**

*African proverb*

AWEF, which began in 2004, is rooted in the belief that the education of girls and women is a powerful antidote to the cycle of poverty, ignorance and violence that has increasingly engulfed so many parts of our world.

AWEF provides secondary education to girls and young women in Angola, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe who are poor but who have shown academic promise and a desire to complete their education.

At AWEF every dollar donated goes directly to the education of young women. Since its inception the AWEF voluntary Board of Directors has donated all operating expenses.

Send donations to AWEF, 104 Grand Street, Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520 or to be added to our e-mail or postal mail list, please go to [info@awef.org](mailto:info@awef.org). (If we can contact you by email, that saves us mailing costs).



## Fundraiser Opens Hearts and Arms

THE FLOWERY OUTDOOR venue at the Grandstand in Croton was the perfect setting for the summer fundraiser for AWEF on September 17. Giant photos of the young women the organization helps educate flanked the patio, which was filled with AWEF supporters both old and new. More than one in attendance commented on how nice it was to finally be able to meet in person and hug old friends.

But the seriousness of AWEF's work was not overlooked during the festivities. Board members Claire Cronin, Bro. Jack Rathschmidt, Sue Ellen Maher and Patrick DeLasho spoke to attendees about the dire need to raise funds especially after the shortage of donations, which was a side effect of the COVID pandemic.

“We've learned that an educated girl becomes a role model for the community, is more likely to marry at a later age, has fewer and healthier children, is more likely to be more productive at home and on the job,

and earns higher wages,” said Maher. “Educating girls helps to break the cycle of poverty and seeds dignity.”

Live music, a pasta food truck, and fantastic drinks from the Grandstand provided the perfect venue for learning more about AWEF, talking with friends, and meeting new neighbors.

Attendees were more than generous, not only making up for the giving deficit during COVID but overwhelming board members with their kindness.

“The beautiful evening and outdoor patio setting, decorated with oversized student photos, lent a festive air to the event,” said Maher. “With so few gatherings in the past year and a half, my joy was amplified as each steadfast AWEF supporter arrived, and I was glad to meet many new members.”

“This year's fundraiser was a long time coming, given the last year and a half,” said AWEF Board President Lori Vlad. “The Grandstand outside space was amazing, with a huge sunflower garden, a food truck offering pasta and cannolis and live music by a fellow board member and her family. We enjoyed meeting so many new people who wanted to hear about the AWEF story and the young women we support. Can't wait for another event there next year!

*The Grandstand was the perfect outdoor venue for AWEF's September fundraiser.*

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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# Back to Our Origins



Like us on Facebook@ African Women's Education Fund.

Visit our website <http://www.awef.org> for a history of AWEF and to learn about alternate giving.

*We thank all who have so graciously contributed their time, talent and resources in support of our mission to educate young women in Africa. With small efforts such as ours we are contributing to making a better life for African women, their families and communities. AWEF is a 501(c) (3), tax-exempt organization. [www.awef.org](http://www.awef.org).*

SEEING SO MANY new faces at AWEF's fundraiser made it seem like a good time to reflect on the organization's origins.

On a warm summer evening in Gaynell and Jim Cronin's backyard in Croton-on-Hudson, the couple's daughter Claire began a discussion with family friend Br. Jack Rathschmidt. The Capuchin friar had just been at a conference, where he met his Tanzanian friend Adewald. As the two discussed the dire poverty in African communities, Rathschmidt asked what could be done to help. Adewald said that he believed the most impactful way to chip away at poverty there would be to educate its women. Adewald told Rathschmidt the story of Honorata.

Honorata, a young woman Adewald had recently met, told him her parents had died and her brothers wanted her to marry, even though she passed the national exams for secondary school. She ran away from her village in Tanzania to the city of Dar es Saalam, lived on the streets, and got a job as night watchperson.

She told Adewald she was desperate to go to school but had no money. He told her his friends in America wanted to do something to help educate girls in Africa. Honorata became the first recipient of an AWEF schol-

arship. She went to school, became a teacher with more than 100 children in two classes, and now has three children of her own.

Years later, when Cronin, Rathschmidt and other board members visited AWEF students in Africa, "I met her in Morogoro," Cronin said. "She came by bus, over 200 miles, with her children, just to say thanks." The African Women's Education Fund was born.

Other family members and friends joined to help. "Fran and Charlie Holt, also from Croton, had a dinner party, which set the tone for the organization as the first gathering," said Cronin. The couple, both now deceased, paved the way for what eventually became the organization's yearly fundraisers, and the grassroots organization began raising funds to educate more girls. Every penny donated was used to provide education, room and board to the four girls AWEF helped educate that first year.

The group became a 501c3 charity, and board members made a commitment to pay for every fundraising expense themselves, so that 100 percent of donations go directly to educating students. To date, the organization has provided 750 years of scholarship awards to hundreds of young women.

**THE UNITED NATIONS HAS DESIGNATED OCTOBER 11 THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD. YOU SEE HOW MUCH STILL NEEDS TO BE DONE FOR GIRLS IN AFRICA. PLEASE HELP AWEF HELP THE GIRLS.**

## A Board Meeting Like No Other

TECHNOLOGY CAN BE a good thing! Last spring's African Women's Education Fund board meeting was particularly special, as members "met" via Zoom with some of the young women the organization helps to educate in Africa.

Though board members missed the ability to gather in person, the addition of the women AWEF educates was really magical and inspiring. They spoke about their courses and exams and recited some beautiful poetry, making everyone even more aware of their connection.



**AWEF**

MARCH 2021

