



AWEF

AFRICAN
WOMEN'S
EDUCATION
FUND
AUTUMN, 2019

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

African proverb

AWEF was started in 2004 by a small group of committed individuals in Croton-on-Hudson, NY. AWEF members believe 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.

To this end, AWEF is doing its small part by providing secondary education to deserving girls and young women in Angola, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The young women we support are poor, often orphaned, or living with one parent or relative, and several siblings, but all 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 Board of Directors has donated all operating expenses.

With your generosity we are doing our part to help improve the future of these young women, their families, and their communities.

Since its local beginning AWEF has expanded to include donors from 18 states across the country plus the District

Pilgrims' Progress

“Poets say that there are two kinds of travelers — tourists and pilgrims. Tourists pass through places, take a thousand photos, but nothing changes. Pilgrims let the places and people they encounter pass through them and are transformed.”

THAT'S THE MESSAGE that Br. Jack Rathschmidt, a Capuchin Franciscan, gave to the ten AWEF supporters who were preparing to accompany him on a trip to Kenya in July to meet many of the girls that AWEF supports. While we were there, we saw and heard and felt things that we never had before, and that we will never forget. Yes, we were transformed.

We paid all of our trip costs ourselves, staying at a Franciscan retreat center in Nairobi and being escorted on most of our travels by Fr. David Kamau, also a Capuchin, who helped found both Mamma Africa primary and secondary school.

The co-ed primary school (pre-school through what we call 8th grade) was built and opened first, in 2011, and is situated on the edge of the horrific Mathare slum. We were given a tour of the school and treated to an assembly of songs, dances and tumbling by the young boys and girls. The students even coaxed Fr. David and Br. Jack out onto the rocky courtyard that served as a stage to show some of their dance moves — to everyone's utter delight.

We then walked deep into Mathare, where 600,000 people live in one-room houses made chiefly of corrugated metal. There is no electricity and no



TOP: Board member Susan Vierzahalek with girls we sponsor at Mamma Africa secondary school. BELOW: The young boys and girls coax Br. Jack into dancing.

running water. Garbage collects on the sides of the road. On another day we toured the even larger Kibera slum in another area of Nairobi. In both, we were invited into the homes of several students, Christian and Muslim, meeting their parents and siblings, deepening our understanding of the challenges they face.

We devoted an entire day to Mamma Africa secondary boarding school, which Fr. David located in 2014 on what was once a pineapple farm in a remote area several hours by car from Nairobi and from any distractions. This is the school most of our girls attend. We currently sponsor 48 of the 111 female students there.

Both before and after lunch we were entertained with songs, dances, skits, and poems by the talented students. Some performances dealt with social issues: one was about the HIV epidemic and its impact on Kenya, another called a girl's refusal to undergo female genital mutilation a basic human right. Seven alumnae joined us that day — some were in university, others were teaching or planned to continue their education. One graduate, now a bank manager, is sponsoring two girls currently at the secondary school.

Finally we broke into discussion groups with the girls we sponsor, and asked them what they wanted their futures to look like. They have lofty dreams: passing the qualifying exams for university, of course, as well as becoming doctors, lawyers, accountants, fighting for children's rights,

of Columbia! We also have supporters currently residing in Israel and the Netherlands.

Please see our calendar for future opportunities to participate. Visit our website www.awef.org for a more in-depth history of AWEF and to learn about alternate giving.

To make a donation by mail: AWEF, 104 Grand Street, Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520.

To be added to our mailing list please go to info@awef.org and send us your name, mailing address and email address. By adding your name to our email list we save mailing costs which is most appreciated.

Like us on Facebook@ African Women's Education Fund

CALENDAR

Karibu Dinners ongoing nationwide

Spring Cocktail Party

Future events will be posted on our website, www.awef.com.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- John Conway
- Carla Dago
- Connie DePinho
- Claire Cronin Dinger
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and doing "works of charity like you are doing." Our trip went by quickly, and we were left with much to process. Br. Jack and Connie DePinho continued on to Tanzania and Angola, respectively, to meet some of the girls that we support there. (See below.) These visits are important, Fr. David believes.

"Giving money is one thing, but it is another thing to see for yourself where the money is actually going, to be in relationship with the girls. Now the girls think, 'Not only is someone paying for me, but has even come to see where I live.' What we are doing is creating a family." - Eileen Keerdoja

"I Cried" >> One of our board members, Connie DePinho, was born in Angola and fled with her family during the 27-year civil war that followed the country's independence from Portugal. She extended her trip to Kenya by returning to Angola for several days to revisit her birthplace, where we are supporting students this year for the first time. "The experience in Kenya was horrific," says Connie "but the experience in Angola, my home country, threw me over the edge."

Four out of five children don't survive infancy in Angola. In Luanda, the capital, some children are living in sewers. Others are doing child labor — shining shoes or hawking items to passengers in moving cars. School children in the province of Huambo, where four of our sponsored girls live, have to walk for miles to school on dirt roads and cross a river on foot — when it is safe to cross.

Otherwise they sleep on the riverbank, hungry and alone, until it is.

All the families of the students we sponsor are facing extreme hardship because they are illiterate, cannot get skilled employment, and live in one-or-two-room shacks with no access to water or electricity. The mothers of two of the students were abandoned by their husbands and are responsible for providing for large families on non-skilled-labor wages of about \$2 a day.

As the country starts to heal and repair, there is a severe shortage of both teachers and schools. Four of the students we sponsor attend the Magistério de Vavayela and will be employed as primary school teachers immediately after graduation. The other student, Vitória, 15, is studying biochemistry at a specialized secondary school in preparation for her to pursue studies in medicine.



Board member Connie DePinho with the first group of girls that AWEF is sponsoring in Angola.

Change Is Good >> We changed things up a bit for our annual spring fundraiser this year. We held the event in a new, waterside location: the Croton Yacht Club. And we invited our male supporters for the first time in a while. There were speeches (but not long ones) and a raffle



and a good time was had by all. By any measure, the event was a resounding success. We had more guests than ever (80 in all) and took in donations totaling \$13,500 — almost double our previous record.

Thank you so much for your generosity. See you next spring!

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.

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