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Building a Bridge to a Brighter Future

SERVE - HEAL - INSPIRE - NURTURE - EMPOWER

You Can Make a Life-Changing Impact

Dear Friends,

SHINE is making a difference! This 2nd quarter newsletter shares information as we build an organization that focuses on youth who age out of foster and orphan care, and those who are struggling to leave behind an impoverished environment as they are thrust out on their own.

We are a new organization, but one committed to building a bridge to a better future for the lives of these young adults as we provide the support needed to help them successfully transition to a stable adulthood. Our focus is on providing education and skill and career development to ensure that these young adults are given real-life skills to be contributing members of their local communities.

To accomplish our goals, we need your help. Would you consider joining our support team and make a life-changing impact for these young adults by supporting SHINE through donations, prayer and volunteering?

[Click Here to Join our Support Team](#)

Our Mission



SHINE exists to Serve, Heal, Inspire, Nurture and Empower vulnerable children, both domestically and internationally, who are transitioning from foster and orphan care or impoverished environments.

SHINE's mission is to bring individuals together to support these children by creating a bridge from their current environment to a future that allows for access to the necessities of a productive life: food, water, shelter, and employment. With a focus on education, skills development and career development, SHINE endeavors to ensure that these young adults are given real-life skills to be contributing members of their local communities.

Why SHINE?

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. **John 1:5**

- 50% of the Nations homeless population are former foster youth. Data shows increases in mental health challenges for older youth, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. It is imperative to prioritize the mental health of youth currently in and aged out of foster care. There is a direct correlation between trauma experienced in child welfare to involvement in the juvenile justice system. For marginalized youth who transition out of foster care these are compounding challenges in navigating psychological and cultural dynamics.

SHINE's Areas of Focus



SHINE's current area of focus is working toward expansion of education. A local example is funding Oconee Memorial Hospital medical brigade. This will support our local hospital residency program and help to retain talent in our medical community. We are also focused on providing life-skills development and scholarships to youth working toward their GED. To meet our goals we need YOU!

SHINE is excited to host an Inaugural Charity Golf Tournament, September 14, 2023. Proceeds from this event will fund our efforts supporting expansion of education for our medical community and youth who age out of foster and orphan care. Your involvement, or donations, in the golf tournament can make a difference. A difference to youth who have been let down by adults most of, if not all of their life. In education or skills for a productive future the odds are stacked against them:

- Only 50% of children in foster care will finish high school.
- Over 40% of school-aged children in foster care have educational difficulties.
- Less than 5% graduate from a four-year college. And 2-6% complete a degree from a two-year college.

If you can come play, please do! To register follow this link: [Golf Tournament \(shineforyourfuture.org\)](https://www.shineforyourfuture.org/golf-tournament). If you can't play, but would like to be part of making a difference and donate, after reading the tier or hole sponsor information at the link above you can donate online here: [Donate \(shineforyourfuture.org\)](https://www.shineforyourfuture.org/donate).

My Pathway to SHINE

girl. I grew up in a church that fully supported fostering. Every summer, our youth group would visit a Children's Home and spend a week with these kids at Camp. I also had several friends that were in foster families at our church. They would come and go too, and I never understood why.

I always felt that I had a big heart but I did not understand how big until after I had children. Filled with much love for my own, as well as others, my eyes opened and I saw a need for another preschool in our community so I started one at our church. A few church children attended, however most of them were from the community. All walks, all types....yes, even a few foster children. Sadly, these children were "different", they were STARVED for attention, acceptance and love. They wanted to stay longer because of the love they felt.

Fast forward many years, I moved to Lake Keowee in 2015. It only took a short time before I met a friend that became heavily involved in the local child care system. Through her, I began to learn much more about the system and how the process can be abused. I began to understand why my preschool children wanted to stay longer. We discussed cases where the child could not stay in the system because of behavior and the challenges of keeping them off the streets. Now, my eyes opened even more.

I knew that children had to leave the system at some point but I had not thought about what that looked like. Then a few years later, into my life walks SHINE....and of course, Kelly. After hearing Kelly's stories, now my eyes are WIDE open! I learned that to age out of the system means basically to be put on the streets to fend for themselves. That is a tall task for any young adult but especially difficult for someone who has spent most, if not all of their lives in an unstable environment. What happens to them? What can we do for them? Why have I never thought of this? Then the learning turned into enthusiasm when I understood there is something I can do to help these children, these young people. I wanted to help Kelly and, most importantly, help SHINE.

SHINE's mission is to show love to vulnerable children and to provide access to opportunities that bring hope for a future. In looking back at my journey, I believe I was doing that all along, but in a different way. Now, today, I want to be a part of that hope and optimism. We can and will make a difference...one step at a time!

Rhonda Owens



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