



The Gweimen Centre Newsletter

A Self Sufficiency Center for Widows and Orphans of HIV/AIDS

Spring 2014

Matching Fund Drive



Once again the Gweimen Centre Board and friends have offered \$5,000 to match funds donated in May or June. The money is used for orphans and widows.

To Donate:

Give online at

www.gweimencentre.org

or mail your check to:

**Gweimen Centre
P.O. Box 1517
Wheaton, IL 60187**

**October Auction Proceeds
Were \$11,300! Thank you!**

Bring the Light

By Mary Sytsma

The Nigerian expression when there is no electricity available is to say, "I hope they bring the light soon." It means, "I hope the government restores the power soon." When the light is taken away, there is no way to predict how long the darkness will last. The people in darkness wait and say, "I hope they bring the light soon."

The nights seem really long. When the power first goes off, and the TV goes blank, the street lights go dark, the house is empty of light and things go silent. The darkness is palpable. No one moves for a minute or two. We wait to see if the darkness will be short lived. As we wait, our eyes adjust a bit to the dark. Then someone in the house will decide the light isn't coming, so she will light a candle, get a flashlight, or start the generator. These things push back the dark.

On my last visit, things were unsettled in Nigeria. The reports of violence were getting closer to the village where the Gweimen Centre is located. Kaduna State was in the news more and more often. I wondered if I should have stayed home. The news of trouble even reached the US. For one stretch, we were without light in the village for two days. Our generator was out of fuel. The village was quiet – no news, no TV, no activity. People stayed home. I felt like I was living in a bubble or a cocoon. Fragile, but safe.

We were like watchmen waiting for the morning. At the centre one afternoon I held a small child, about two years old, whose name was Peace. She wanted to be held and I was happy to hold her as I watched the older children play soccer with a deflated basketball. They were having fun. Others played with the scooters, taking turns without supervision. The little girls were playing with dolls without my having to set a timer to force them to share. Fragile, but peaceful.

When I first brought the dolls and the scooters to the children, the children often fought over them. They weren't used to having toys. The older boys often overpowered the younger ones and took more than their share of turns. With encouragement, the fights were less frequent. Gweimen became a way of life. I didn't see kids hitting each other. The grownups were not standing over them with sticks to keep them in line. Over time, love was making a difference. Gweimen was pushing back the dark. Gweimen means peace.

The Gweimen Centre is bringing the light in a dark and threatening place. Nigeria is not a place known for peace, but at the Gweimen Centre, among the children, peace is possible. May this peace, that passes understanding, radiate like a light in the darkness from this little piece of God's kingdom into all the surrounding villages and beyond.



Light in Dark Places

By Joy Townsend

Recently I had a conversation with my sister-in-law that greatly affected me. Over the past six months, she has shared with me the struggles of one of her grandson's 8-year-old friends. The boys have been buddies since before kindergarten. During this last year his friend was diagnosed with brain cancer. The disease took its normal, ugly course and the little guy underwent chemo and radiation. Soon after a Make-A-Wish trip to a Packers game in Wisconsin he died at home as per his request.

The part of the conversation I remember most was hearing about the mom calling the funeral home and asking them to come get him. After prayerful consideration she very clearly told them they were not to bring a stretcher in the home, but that she would carry her son to the vehicle. Many times since then I have welled up with tears as I picture this mother, father and brother carrying this 8-year-old baby boy out to that waiting driver, knowing that they would never hold him again. I am in awe of the temerity, foresight and strength that this woman had when she looked ahead to thoughtfully and prayerfully create a memory she could live with for the rest of her life.

Some things we do not have any control over. Once this precious child was diagnosed, his family did everything they could possibly do. Everyone in this family's circle felt so helpless even though he had all the treatments, comfort, medications, and support that he needed. I know in my heart that it is all too often and ordinary that a woman in Nigeria has her child deteriorate and get sick and die and that too many children witness the same progression with their parent. Being a part of Gweimen is one way that I feel like I am making a difference where I can. I can help make a better future or at least give a possibility at a future for these women and children. I know we make a huge difference at the Gweimen Centre and that we have had an enormous impact on the lives of the orphans and widows there. Innumerable lives have been changed because of medical assistance, nutrition, education, vocational training and the Christian support that Gweimen has provided. Life is so short and so unpredictable. The things that really matter are that we love and help each other and carry God's light into dark places.

www.gweimencentre.org

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Board Members: Greg Bendle, Shari Buma, Kathy Carwell, Rick Johnson (Secretary), Heather Loss, Janna Piersma, Mary Sytsma (President), John Townsend, Joy Townsend, Rachel Vander Hill, and Steve Van Zee (Treasurer)