

Operation Bootstrap

Dignity Winter 2024 Holiday Edition

Nothing to Give Back, yet Eternally Grateful

As we approach the remarkable milestone of 60 years of empowering lives through education, Operation Bootstrap Africa (OBA) continues to make strides toward a future filled with hope and opportunity. Thanks to our amazing donors, we are changing lives in East Africa—providing access to education, supporting motivated and bright students, and empowering entire communities. Your generosity is making a powerful, life-changing impact, and we couldn't be more grateful.



This edition of the OBA Dignity newsletter highlights some of the incredible work you've helped make possible. Our Discovery Tours are bringing more people to experience firsthand the paradigm-shifting impact of OBA's work in Africa. Each trip opens eyes and hearts to the extraordinary difference education makes in the lives of young people and their communities.

We're also celebrating the wonderful contribution from students at Irondale High School, who not only volunteered at an OBA event but also donated over \$1,200 from bagging groceries. Their generosity is a

true example of how everyone can make a difference, no matter their age.

You'll be excited to read about the success of the Pre-Form 5 pilot project at Maasai Girls Lutheran Secondary School (MGLSS), which is providing a safe alternative to the current 10-month break between Forms 4 and 5 while engaging them in extra-curricular classes to continue their academic journey. Education is a gift that keeps on giving, and your support ensures these girls have the resources they need to succeed.

We are especially thrilled to announce that we met the match for the Mark and Linda Jacobson Endowed Scholarship! A generous couple from the state of Washington challenged our donors with a one-to-one match up to \$100,000. Thanks to your incredible support, we not only met the challenge but fully funded the endowment, which will now train more than one doctor a year - serving millions in perpetuity.

With heartfelt gratitude, we want to say a special thank you. Like a parent whose child receives a meal at school when they can't provide one at home, we humbly appreciate your kindness. One of our beneficiaries said it best: "We don't have anything to give in return, so we thank God and pray for your health and happiness."

Your generosity is making a difference. Every dollar you give, every life you touch, brings us closer to a world where education is a right, and where empowered young Africans can transform their communities. Thank you for believing in this mission and for standing alongside us in this vital work.

Together, we are changing lives—one student, one school, one scholarship at a time.

Jason Bergmann

Executive Director

Operation Bootstrap Africa

Laront Finana

Mark &Linda Jacobson Endowed Scholarship Goal Reached!

Dr. Mark Jacobson's dream was to ensure that quality healthcare was accessible for all people in Tanzania. He and his wife spent thirty years as missionaries in Tanzania. In 2021 they spoke with OBA Executive Director, Jason Bergmann, about creating the Dr. Mark and Linda Jacobson Endowed Scholarship, which would provide a full medical scholarship to a doctor in Tanzania every year in perpetuity. It would also fund community projects for widows and women in need, which was Linda's passion

and work.

OBA and the Jacobsons began to fundraise for the effort in December of 2021, but in February of 2022 Dr. Mark passed away. This scholarship became more than his dream, it became a legacy. In his honor, OBA and Linda began a capital campaign to raise the \$1.1 Million dollars that would be needed to fully fund the scholarship. Many incredible supporters stepped up for their friend and colleague, but in 2023, we were still shy of our goal. An event in September of 2023 raised over \$100,000 toward the goal. We were elated with the outcome, but there was still more to raise.

In June of 2024, David and Lynne Nelson offered a match: every dollar raised for the endowment from June-September would be matched!

Donors responded to the challenge and the endowment is now fully funded – even beyond the \$1.1 million original goal! We did it!



Noah Nathaneal, first scholarship recipient and second year medical student at Hubert Kairuki Memorial University

In the last two years five students have been fully supported by the Dr. Mark and Linda Jacobson Endowed Scholarship. More students than Mark could have hoped for. We want to thank all participants, and especially major contributors: Phil and Gail Minerich, Ron and Debbie Gustafson, and David and Lynne Nelson. Without you, this would not have been possible. Mark and Linda's dream is a reality. Thank you!

Pre-Form 5 Program Success

In previous editions of the Dignity you have learned of the ten-month break mandated by the Tanzanian government between Form 4 and Form 5. At the MaaSAE Girls Lutheran Secondary School (MGLSS), this gap is responsible for an average loss of 31% of our students. Young ladies often return to their boma (hut), thinking that they will find understanding parents who have changed their views on her future and will praise her for finishing Form 4. This is rarely the case.

Many of these young women are forced to marry upon arrival home, and never return to finish the education they have desperately fought to obtain. OBA and MGLSS created a potential solution in the "Pre-Form 5 Program". This program keeps the young ladies on campus during the extended break. They participate in trainings and workshops from a variety of fields and learn more about leadership skills and potential career paths they can pursue.



July marked the end of the first year of the program. Each of the participants rated the program a "5/5". As mentioned before, usually 31% of our Form 5 students are lost to this break, but this year we lost only ONE student to forced marriage. The program is working and it is saving the lives of Maasai girls.

Volunteer Highlight — Irondale Black Students Union

Teenagers generally get a bad wrap in the USA. In media, they are usually portrayed as hormonal monsters with little regard to the world outside of their phones. Kena Abdissa and her fellow students in the Irondale High School Black Students Union (IHSBSU) definitely do not fit that stereotype. Each of these incredibly bright and driven young people have been so generous with their time and so passionate about OBA's mission.

Kena learned about OBA through her mentor, Pam, who adventured with OBA to Uganda in October of 2023. Pam has been a true advocate and sponsor for Kiyoora High School in Ntungamo, Uganda. After her incredible journey she shared her passion for Kiyoora with Kena, who was immediately intrigued.

Kena shared her mentor's story with the IHSBSU and they wanted to get involved. In June, they started an

initiative to raise money for OBA to support Kiyoora High School.

Bagging at Cub foods would be their initial effort. They stood at the end of the check out lane to assist customers in bagging their groceries, and share why they were doing so. If the customer felt

empowered, they could give a gift to the students in a "tip bucket" they made themselves with the OBA logo.

6

The students found success in bagging, and did so again in August. After these two events the IHSBSU raised a total of \$1,253.32 for Kiyoora High School. Tuition for an upperclassman at Kiyoora High School

costs \$650 per student. Two orphaned junior students at Kiyoora were faced with the reality of having to quit school, as they had no idea how they



were going pay for their final year. The money raised from the IHSBSU was used to sponsor these two students, who are now joyously attending their final semesters at a school they adore.

These incredible students could have stopped there. A good deed had been done, and they could add their volunteer work to their college applications. That's not what they are about. The

IHSBSU offered to assist OBA with their fundraising event, "A Night of Light: Illuminating Futures in East Africa." OBA accepted their offer with glee. Coordinating a fundraising event is a lot of work, and making it run smoothly on the night is the most challenging part!

The students showed up promptly, learned how to register donors, use auction software, and helped organize and lay out the entire event without a single complaint. They even took photos so we could share them in this very issue of the

We want to thank the Irondale High School Black Students Union for their incredible effort and heart. They have shown such sincere care for our mission, and we are so grateful for their desire to work beside us to create positive change.

Dignity!

What "Eripoto" Means: Providing

Many scholars and cultural anthropologists have argued for decades on the exact age of the Maaasi tribe. According to their own oral history, the Maasai people originated in the Nile Valley in Sudan and have been migrating south since the 15th century. In that time they have cultivated a vibrant and beautiful culture filled with family, color, and community. Many Maasai families rely on raising cattle and goats for survival and faced many poverty-related challenges including food insecurity and lack of access to clean drinking water and medical care. Despite these challenges, the Maasai have remained resilient and proudly kept their customs and beliefs, some of which have not aged well in modern society.

As many of you well know, men are the cultural leaders in the Maasai tribe. The men make



the decisions for the tribe, they are in charge of the livelihood of their family (their cows), and they manage their family system, which often includes multiple wives. They often have children with each of their wives, which leads to a multitude of children. Male children are expected to either learn how to herd the animals and follow in the footsteps of their father, or pursue education and careers to bring prosperity to the family. Females are simply expected to marry. Often young girls as young as 11 are promised to a village elder, who has

earned a young wife after years of leadership and service. Maasai women are the pinnacle of the tribe. They build their bomas (huts), they collect the firewood, they care for the children, they milk the animals, they ensure the family unit runs smoothly and effectively. However, main duty is to ensure their husband is cared for and happy.

Esuvat Lucumay grew up in northern Tanzania and is a product of these cultural practices. In keeping with Maasai tradition, Esuvat's father had more than one wife, so her family was quite large. Though Esuvat and her siblings had access to primary school, which Esuvat

completed in 2001, access to secondary school was limited. In addition, like many Maasai, Esuvat's parents had little experience with formal education and questioned its value, particularly for girls. Esuvat's father saw more value in fetching a bride price for his daughters than in educating them.

Though Esuvat desperately hoped to continue her education after primary school, her family instead arranged for her marriage. Esuvat refused this arrangement and begged to continue her education for several years, but her family eventually arranged for Esuvat to be forcibly taken to her husband-to-be. One day after working in the farm fields, Esuvat was kidnapped by several men, badly beaten, and taken to her would-be mother-in-law's home. She stayed with this woman for three days before running away.



Esuvat Lucumay, Founder of Eripoto for Women and Girls

Esuvat was homeless, but she found a job as a housekeeper and began saving money so

Safety and Security to Girls in Need

she could return to school. Through her hard work and the support of a sponsor, Esuvat was able to complete a two-year training course in tailoring and typing during this time. After the training course, Esuvat still dreamt of completing secondary school.

With the help of the late Lutheran bishop, Thomas Laiser, and her sponsor, Esuvat was able to attend Moringe Sokoine Secondary School. There, she met headmaster Dr. Seth Msinjili, who provided her with support, encouragement, and housing at one of the first safe houses for girls in Tanzania. She achieved high marks in secondary school and received a government scholarship to study at the University of Arusha, where she completed degrees in business administration and human resources management.

Today, Esuvat operates Eripoto for Girls and Women, which she founded in 2022 to help other young women who face similar challenges. Local law enforcement and primary schools seek

her out when they learn that a young girl is in need of rescue. Each of the girls at Eripoto have their own story about escaping rape, marriage, beatings, or all three. Esuvat knows their struggles firsthand and wants to pass on the educational gift she has been given to the next generation of women leaders. OBA has joined Esuvat to support her dream of making education available to girls who have faced so many challenges and trauma. OBA funds 100% of the young ladies school fees, as well as the school fees of their children, who also live at Eripoto.



Residents of Eripoto for Women and Girls, all survivors of harmful cultural practices.

In the Maasai language, Eripoto means safety and security, which is exactly what Esuvat is providing for the young women and children who are housed there. There are security cameras, security fences, and guards that give residents a piece of mind. Eripoto women and girls are safe, secure, and confident. They attend class, practice life skills that they would learn in the boma, and are coached in leadership and career advancement.



Day Care facility that operates within Eripoto.

Eripoto for Women and Girls is determined to build a community where girls and women enjoy freedom, rights, and dignified lives. Their safe house is a place of comfort, family, and light. A daycare for the children of the residents operates there, and other children in need are welcomed to join in classes as well. There are currently over 30 residents housed there, with each room at full capacity. Esuvat is always constructing new space to house more young girls in need. She selflessly gave up her own house to the young ladies, and is constructing a new one on a near by parcel of land.

Esuvat is another mother to all of these young women and their children. She and her eleven staff and volunteers ensure that all

are cared for and encouraged to pursue their education and dreams. OBA is proud to stand beside them as they begin their journeys into independence. No one should be forced to live a life of servitude and oppression. All should have "Eripoto", safety and security.

5



MGLSS 30th Anniversary Celebration

In 1995 OBA founder, David J. Simonson, walked the rows of coffee alongside other dreamers in the sleepy mountain town of Monduli. This piece of farm land was a blank slate for a dream that was thirty years in the making. Rev. Simonson had been working with the Maasai all that time, and realized that there was a great need to give the girls in the tribe a voice in what their future looked like. He knew that given the choice the girls would choose to go to school rather than be married. He knew there was need for the MaaSAE Girls Lutheran Secondary School (MGLSS).

Fast forward another thirty years at the same site, and you will see the fruit of a dreamer's labors. A chapel in the shape of a Maasai shield is the heart of the campus, with classrooms, dormitories and other structures circling it. The sound of learning and laughter fills the air as students join together to prepare for examinations. Teachers walk to their designated homes on the outskirts of campus, happy to be so close to their families after a long day.



On February 22nd MGLSS will celebrate it's 30th anniversary with a large event on campus. They invite all friends of the school to attend. OBA is so proud of the many accomplishments of the students and staff over the last thirty years. Each graduate is a testimony to the hard work and resilience that defines the Maasai. Hundreds of Maasai women have graduated from this beloved institution, and we look forward to meeting the hundreds yet to come.

Connections Through Time



Part of what makes OBA unique is the longevity of the organization. Founded in 1965, OBA is nearly 60 years old. During this time, so many connections and relationships have been built here in the US, but also around the world. These diverse relationships have stood the test of time, and help to tell the story of OBA's impact.

Maria Nhambu has a number of impressive accolades. She is a globally recognized author who has earned multiple awards and seals with her "Africa's Child" series, which depicts her life growing up as a mixed race child in an orphanage in northern Tanzania. She is also a gifted dancer who created a new kind of aerobics based on African dance called, "Aerobics with Soul". The most surprising of her many accomplishments may be this one: former OBA Board

member.

Jean Spong, Cheryl Neeley, Marlys Melius, Chris Floss, Maria Nhambu, and myself (all pictured above) met on August 14th after finding out that Cheryl and Maria have been close friends for a long time. Cheryl is a member of Christ the King Lutheran Church, where Maria's books have been read and appreciated for quite some time. The ladies at Christ the King graciously invited me to a group lunch with Nhambu. It was a sensational experience of storytelling and friendship.

Nhambu shared her early experiences with OBA, and the importance of the mission. To this day she believes that educating young girls is the most impactful way to make the change that Tanzanians want to see in

their country. We are so glad to have made this reconnection with Maria. OBA strives to keep making these connections. If you have stories of OBA's past you want to share with staff, please contact me, (Bri): briana@bootstrapafrica.org.

Madagascar Moment

1. How do you say, "hello" in Malagasy?

A. Habari B. Jambo

C. Salama

D. Baadaye

2. How do you say, "lemur" in Malagasy?

A. Gidro

B. Trondro

C. Akoho

D. Amboa

3. What is the population of Madagascar?

A. 15,000,000

B. 20,000,000 C.900,000

D. 32,000,000



4. How many students are impacted by OBA programs in Madagascar every day?

A. 250+

B. 500+

C. 1,000+

D. 2,000+

Answers on page 12

Thank You for Attending A Night of Light!



OBA donors and friends gathered to celebrate their passion for educating young girls in East Africa at A Night of Light: Illuminating Futures in East Africa on September 14th at the Heritage Center in Brooklyn Center. This was OBA's second event in two years, and it was a night to remember for sure.

The evening started with a social hour and silent auction, featuring a variety of items from Eastern Africa, as well as unique items from

the USA, such as lovely watercolors by local painter Jim Baker and a wine class/tasting for up to 20 people from Total Wine. Every item available was sold!

Esuvat Lucumay, founder and Executive Director of Eripoto for Women and Girls (featured previously in this edition) was set to be the keynote speaker for the event, but her travel visa was denied by the Tanzanian government with no appeal. Though we were very saddened that she could not join us, Esuvat is a woman of hope and

message for us to share at the event filled with hope, strength, and courage.



After the Fund-A-Need and Heads or Tails game, board member Dr.

Jack McAllister took the stage. Jack shared his history with OBA, and his fondness for Tanzania. He was a great friend to Dr. Mark Jacobson, a visionary missionary doctor who founded the Arusha Lutheran Medical Centre. Jack announced the exciting news that THREE young medical students were going to be supported through the Dr. Mark and Linda

Jacobson Endowed Scholarship this year, rather than one. It was a jovial

announcement with a great reception from the crowd.

It was a night of connection and community, and we want to thank all who traveled to be with us on this night. Participants came from far and wide, some even traveled from Tanzania and Uganda to show their support of OBA's mission. We are humbled by the quality of friends and partners that OBA has cultivated throughout its history. Look out for the announcement of next year's big 60th Anniversary Celebration!



Peace Lutheran Legacy Gift to OBA

Written by Michael Onan

Peace Lutheran Church of Plymouth, MN had a long history of supporting Operation Bootstrap Africa's mission in Tanzania, particularly the MaaSAE Girls Lutheran Secondary School in Monduli. MGLSS's first Head Mistress was Jane Tellekson, a member of Peace Lutheran during her youth. Her father, Keith Tellekson, was a longtime member of Peace Lutheran and was on OBA's Board of Directors in the 1990's. Peace Lutheran sponsored the entire second class of 45 students at MGLSS beginning in 1996. Since then, numerous Peace member have traveled to Tanzania to visit the school and other OBA projects.



Grace Touring and Mike Onan from Peace Lutheran visit OBA office to share last gift.

Sadly, Peace Lutheran Church voted on January 15, 2024, to dissolve the congregation, 45 years after



Construction of the MGLSS Guesthouse

its formation. This was the result of declining membership and the associated financial challenges. The Congregation sold it's property to a first-generation immigrant Chinese Christian congregation named West Metro Chinese Church. After paying off the mortgage and meeting other financial obligations, Peace Lutheran decided to donate its remaining cash to the various ministries it had supported and been involved with during its 45 years. This past summer the Congregation donated \$40,000 to OBA. OBA has plans to use this money to help construct a guest house at MGLSS that will be used to house international mission groups visiting the school. Although it was sad and emotionally difficult to dissolve the Congregation, former Peace members are pleased to be able to make a final donation to OBA to help its mission in Africa continue.

OBA is Moving!

After five successful years at our current location, we have decided to move due to our rent being doubled at our current address. Our new address as of 11/7/2025 is:

7100 Northland Circle North
Suite 403
Minneapolis, MN 55428



Tis' the Season to Be Giving! Let Saving the Lives of Girls in Africa be Your Legacy

Ways to Give:

- Give Directly from Your IRA—If you are 70^{1/2} or older your contribution will count towards your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) and will not be included in your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI). You may contribute up to \$100,000 annually from your IRA. In some situations lowering your AGI may be more beneficial than itemizing charitable deductions.
- Make a Stock Contribution—Gifts of stock are generally tax deductible at the full fair-market value and exempt from long-term capital gains tax.
- Create a Donor Advised Fund—A donor advised fund allows your assets including cash, appreciated stock, mutual funds, real estate, and more to be invested and grow tax-free. Contributions to your fund are tax deductible in the year that they are made, but may be granted to eligible charitable organizations over a period of multiple years. Donor advised funds are a useful tool for donors who are affected by the new, higher standard deduction threshold and wish to combine multiple years worth of giving into one year in order to itemize.
- Legacy Gifts—Include a gift to OBA in your will or trust, designate OBA as a beneficiary of your IRA or life insurance policy, or give to the OBA Endowment Fund.

Thank you for putting us in your future planning.
The little reminder cards cost a penny a piece. A
small price to empower you to leave a legacy.



OBA is proud to have been recognized as a 4-star organization by Charity Navigator for 10 consecutive years, and for meeting the highest standards of financial health, transparency, and accountability. This puts us in the top 10% of all nonprofit organizations in the United States.

We are a mission-driven organization, committed to ensuring your support goes where it is most needed!

For more information, please contact the OBA office.

Operation Bootstrap Africa and its affiliates are not financial advisors and cannot provide tax, legal, or accounting advice. Please consult your financial planner to learn how gifts to OBA may benefit your unique tax or financial situation.



OBA Book Club

A place to share books by and about the OBA Family, our projects, and the communities we serve

Naserian of the Maasai by Devendra Veda

OBA cannot recommend this book enough! We know that it can be challenging to find a way to invigorate young ones with the passion that you have for Africa. We find that this book has made it so much easier! Written for all ages, Naserian's story is truthful, engaging and very informative. Readers will even learn some Maa—the Maasai language. The book transports the reader to the Tanzanian bush and explains the beauty and challenges of a young Maasai girl in the most charming and approachable way. The Indigenous and Ethnic Culture Series, published by HER Book House, is intended to provide a glimpse into the life of minority cultures from different parts of the world and how such cultures are forced to adapt to survive in a world that threatens to leave them behind.

Naserian of the Maasai is a young lady who loves her family and loves attending school. The road to school is long and she has many obstacles along her way. Find out if she will make it to school!



Operation Bootstrap Africa Board of Directors

Dr. Peyton T. Taylor Jr. (President), Stan Guimont (Vice President), Dean McDevitt (Treasurer), Pastor Kjell Ferris (Secretary), Gene Mickelson, Doreen Hernesman, Dr. John (Jack) McAllister Jr., Marlys Peters-Melius, Dr. John (Jack) Cochran Jr.





OBA

5701 Kentucky Ave N.

Suite 200

Minneapolis, MN 55428

Dignity is a publication for friends of OBA, a Minnesota-based non-profit dedicated to helping people help themselves through a variety of educational programs in Africa.

In partnership with African communities and organizations, they provide support and assistance to projects and programs based on locally-established priorities.

Gifts to OBA are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. OBA reserves the right to utilize up to 10% of revenue to fund undesignated opportunities.

Website: www.operationbootstrapafrica.org

Twitter: @OBAorg

Facebook: www.facebook.com/OperationBootstrapAfrica

Instagram @BootstrapAfrica

Email: info@operationbootstrapafrica.org

Phone: 1-612-871-4980 OR Toll-Free at 1-888-755-1318



Answers from Page 7: 1=C, 2=A, 3=D, 4=D











Join us for the experience of a lifetime in Tanzania!

Travel to Tanzania with OBA on a Discovery Tour! Visit our projects including schools and clinics, embark on safari to view some of the world's most abundant and beautiful wildlife, and engage in cultural activities.

Tours cost approximately \$5,000-\$6,000 per person, including airfare, meals, lodging, tips, and all land travel costs. Costs not covered include beverages, immunizations, anti-malarial medication, a Tanzanian tourist visa, and travel insurance. A Zanzibar extension and other optional excursions may be arranged at an additional cost. Tours are limited to 10 participants. Contact the OBA office for more information. or to secure your spot on a future tour.

Upcoming Tours

February 2025 April 2025 July 2025 October 2025