Blessing the Children INTERNATIONAL
2265 Fraser Road
Kawkawlin, MI 48631

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Connecting with your Child

In late 2020, we sent updated child photos with our last round of child letters for the year. We hope you enjoyed seeing a recent photo of how much your child has grown.

We understand the demands on everyone's time these days and want to make it easier for you to connect with your child. For 2021, we will pilot a new way of communicating with your child. If handwriting a letter and taking it to the post office is cumbersome for your busy schedule, we would like to offer the opportunity for you to send a letter to your child via e-mail. It will be best to handwrite a letter and scan it or take a photo of it and attach it to the e-mail, as this will be most personal. If your time is very short, please feel free to write your letter directly in the body of the e-mail.

You may send these communications at any time to us at info@blessingthechildren.org. In the title of the e-mail, please indicate that it is a letter for your child and include your child's name. Of course, a handwritten letter mailed to BCI is most personal, but your child will be thrilled for any communication from you. Please feel free to take advantage of this opportunity to connect with your child.

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Post Newsletter

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Www.BlessingTheChildren.org | Info@BlessingTheChildren.org

Surviving and Thriving

If you would have told us a year ago that in a matter of months we would be teaching our children via tablet PC's, we would have found that unbelievable. What's unbelievable now is that roughly a year has passed since the world was forever changed by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. No matter what part of the world you live in and whether you are a student, parent, senior, or anything in between, your life has been touched in some way by this most challenging year. It's not something any of us were prepared for, but as always, our ministry has been led through this difficult period by God's grace and the support of our donor family.

Some of the greatest challenges our ministry faced in 2020 included:

1. *Providing additional support for unemployed families who received no government aid*

In Ethiopia, there are no unemployment programs that allow for a daily laborer to receive financial support when unable to work. This meant that many of our families were simply without income and would have went hungry without some intervention. This was the most critical need we had during 2020 and required additional support of $1,200 per month. We have been able to fund this through January 2021 due to donor support and we pray that support will continue to make this additional aid possible over the next several months.

2. *Making distance learning possible when schools were closed*

Education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty for the children we serve. So many vulnerable students worldwide dropped out of school during the first nine months of the pandemic. We felt that it was urgent to keep our children engaged in learning. Because of support from our donor family, we were able to provide tablet PC's for a number of children. In late 2020, the children resumed in-person learning on a split schedule, which allows for greater distancing. This means that they attend school three days per week. On the days in between, those with tablet PC's are able to access learning resources at home while the remaining students study, read and complete homework assignments.

Surviving and Thriving cont...

Children receiving tablet PC's for distance learning in 2020

3. *Keeping the school financially viable during lockdown*

When schools were forced shut by the government, not only was no financial assistance provided, we were required to continue paying all of our teachers and staff their regular salaries. With so many parents and guardians out of work, many stopped paying tuition or at best paid at a reduced rate. Support from our sponsorship family allowed us to keep the school viable. The frank reality is that we would not have lasted one month longer had we not been able to re-open when we did. We were blessed with exactly the right provision needed to sustain the school until re-opening.

4. *Funding the safety measures needed to re-open*

In order to meet guidelines set forth by the local health department for safe re-opening, we were tasked with building hand washing stations, making masks, soap and sanitizer available in massive quantities, and building additional seating to allow for distancing. These were certainly not foreseen expenditures for the 2020 school year. In addition, an infrastructure project that has been high on our list for the past three years came into sharp focus; the need for a water well on the Bethlehem campus of the BCI Academy. Cost had kept this project on somewhat of a back burner, but the pandemic brought this need to the forefront.

Our children had a unique opportunity to take part in the fundraising effort with the Wooha Run. We sought pledges on their behalf and they eagerly gathered on the school campus on a Saturday morning and ran through the town of Debre Zeyit. The police blocked off the roads and the Mayor came to speak and thank our ministry for taking on this well project, which will be shared with the local community.

Late in the year, with 70% or so of the funding in, we took a leap of faith and contracted with a company to begin digging the well. We truly didn't know if, when or how we would complete the project, but it was too important to wait any longer.

Just before the close of 2020, we reached our goal of fully funding the well project. We are grateful for the support that made it possible to undertake such a large and critical infrastructure project during a time when finances are universally impacted. It has certainly been a year of challenges but also a year to remember, as our international family pulled together to accomplish some remarkable things on behalf of some very special children and families.

Teachers training for virtual learning

2021: A Year of Kindness

2020 was a difficult year, to say the least. At BCI, we have put our heads together to brainstorm ways to bring light to our Ethiopian families in 2021. From this, A Year of Kindness was born. We are excited about this new project and hope you will be too.

A Year of Kindness was inspired by a video of a "YouTuber" knocking on strangers doors and paying their rent. We thought - how wonderful would it be for a struggling family in Ethiopia to receive such a gift. Not only would this random act of kindness be a relief and a blessing, it would point to God, because everything we do is for His glory.

Each month, we will offer a way that you can get involved in our Year of Kindness project. First up for the month of January - "Knocking on Doors and Paying Rent." For $30, you can pay a month of rent for an Ethiopian family in need. We will post a video to http://www.facebook.com/Blessingthechildrenintl of our staff surprising a family with this blessing on your behalf.

To get involved, make a One-Time Gift through our website and indicate that your gift is for "January Kindness":
https://www.blessingthechildren.org/donate.html
Alternatively, mail a check with "January Kindness" in the memo, or give us a call at (888) 269-2719. Be sure to follow along on Facebook where we will post videos and updates about this heartwarming and meaningful project.

Immediate Needs

Single-Student Desks
Make it possible for us to safely space our students with single-student desks at the BCI Academy

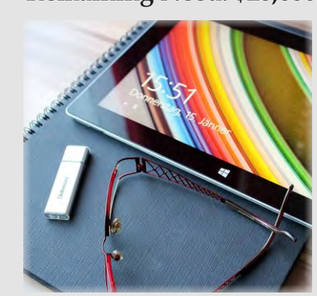
Need: $80/desk
Raised: $0
Remaining Need: $12,000

February Food Support
Provide critical food support for families in crisis due to the effects of the pandemic.

Need: $30/family
Raised: $0
Remaining Need: $1,200

Tablets for Education
Provide tablets to keep the children connected to education during the pandemic.

Need: $180/tablet
Raised: $7,200
Remaining Need: $28,080



You can **make a donation** by phone at (888) 269-2719, by web at www.BlessingtheChildren.org or by mail to:
Blessing the Children, 2265 Fraser Road, Kawkawlin, MI 48631