

Thigio, Kenya Sparks of Charity and Compassion

Almost all of us endured some sort of lock down or isolation this year. Some of us lost loved ones. Streets were empty. Shops were closed. It was a difficult and trying year for everyone. As we approach Christmas with a renewed promise and hope born of faith, I am Happy to share with you a few sparks of light from the past year.

Early in 2021, Covid-19 continued to plague Kenya. The staff in our clinic and our hospice were frightened. They did not want to become ill and they did not want to carry illness home to their families. Road blocks on the way to work heightened their anxiety. But day after day they came to work caring for the patients who came to the clinic and caring for patients in the hospice. They even went out to some patients who were homebound. Our medical staff were a steady beacon in the first days of the storm that was and is Covid-19.



As the days turned into weeks, we became increasingly concerned about our children with disabilities and the elderly who attend the lunch and social club. In response to this concern we set up a phone check routine and we organized food distribution to the most needy. The physiotherapist visited some families to ensure that children just learning to walk did not fall behind. Teachers assigned parents and students learning tasks and our social worker followed up on children known to be especially vulnerable.

When the lockdowns were lifted we all came together, but with new routines of temperature taking, hand washing and social distancing. Kisima the program for children and adolescents with disabilities actually gained students. In total the program of classes and day centers for children and youth with disabilities has 118 Participants. Some of our frail elderly clients became even more frail and some went to God. Those actively attending the lunch and social program are now 68, with 6 homebound members that we visit.

The children in Kisima disabilities program and the elderly have recently taken on a new project. On the school grounds the children have planted a vertical garden. Being from a farming community the children were very proud when they received their first harvest. Sister Ann is now in charge of all things agriculture and she is working with the elderly and with the families of the children with disabilities to plant kitchen gardens at home. The small garden on the school campus is a very productive sample. The advantage of the small gardens is that water is used more efficiently. Nderu day center for adults with disabilities also has a new greenhouse. Nderu also has the largest 'shama' (garden) and they are able to share produce with the other classes and centers. The clients who are able take great pride in helping with the garden.



The women's development group also met with some success this year. The women have participated in classes in small business development, women's health, child safeguarding and human trafficking. In addition to classes the women were helped to develop small businesses. Five women have become quite good at making and selling soap. The women make the bar soap from used cooking oil and they sell it in the market. Hard to imagine but the soap is actually very nice. Another group of women is selling KOKO cookers. These small countertop cookers burn Ethanol. They are very efficient and affordable and much better for the environment than charcoal. Both enterprises seem to be making a small profit which is steadily increasing. Another of our clients who lost her sight some time ago, has been able to open a green grocer. It is tiny, just a table top really but Christine is very happy with it. This small change has brought her renewed self-confidence, hope and a small bit of income.

The youth were also thrilled to return to the playing field. Covid-19 provided time for the Daughters of Charity to assess the youth program. For many years older youth came to the hall to watch sports and to play table tennis, darts and pool. After some reflection the Daughters of Charity decided to close the weekend program for older youth and reopen with younger participants. New activities were added and new teams of younger players were formed. We now have teams for boys and girls. The girls compete in both football and volley ball. In addition to sports there are opportunities for music, dance and drama classes. We hope to put on a show for parents when the time is right. We have a new local volunteer who is a professional musician!



Next year the Daughters of Charity hope to sponsor a girls' club called New Horizons. The aim of the club is to identify girls who might be at risk of dropping out of school and offer them encouragement, social support and direction. The club members will enjoy recreational activities, field trips to learn about different careers and speakers. Speakers will encourage the girls to stay in school, stay focused and to make positive life choices.

Thank you for helping us to bring these small sparks of light and hope to children with disabilities, the elderly, youth, and women struggling to provide for their families. Perhaps these small sparks will help to keep alive the flame of Charity and Compassion in our world. Have a Blessed Christmas and a very New Year!

Daughters of Charity

Thigio, KENYA