

JOURNEYS

Winter 2015

Dream big

Changing the lives of children,
youth, families and sponsors



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On the cover:

Brayan and Cristofer dream of a better future in Guatemala. Photo credit: Javier Cárcamo

The Voice of a Nation

Sponsored youth Francine was chosen as the "Let's Read Zambia" ambassador by the Ministry of Education. Read her story on page 10.





Dare to Dream

When I visit our sponsored children, youth and families, their resolute spirit never ceases to amaze me. It is clear after talking with them that we can't afford to be satisfied with how far we've come; we must continue to dream big so that *they* can dream big, too!

In this issue, we share stories of children, youth and sponsorship graduates who are doing just that – they are pursuing their dreams despite being born into some of the worst possible circumstances. Through our carefully designed and well-supported programs, they are overcoming gang violence, hunger and lack of access to education – daily struggles that would devastate most children in their situations. But these children aren't giving up. They are striving for even greater success. And when they overcome almost impossible odds and find hope, they develop a special kind of strength. I find that most inspiring!

Consider, for example, the toddler who lived in one of the most crime-ridden neighborhoods in Zambia (page 10). Because her CI community center gave her access to books, the tiny prodigy began reading at age 2. Now, 10 years later, she was appointed as her nation's ambassador for a reading and literacy program. Next, read the story (page 6) of a young girl in the Philippines who feared for the well-being of her family due to the dilapidated condition of the shack they called home. Today, she has a successful career as a law-enforcement officer and is grateful for the opportunity to give back to others in need.

Because of our program's design, children and youth who take advantage of the opportunities we offer are overcoming incredible obstacles and even surpassing their own definitions of success.

How does this happen? One word: You! Because you care enough to invest in changing lives. When youth graduate from the program, they become multipliers of hope and opportunity for others. So, the next time you look at your sponsored child's photo, picture all the thousands of people you are helping inspire. And revel in the incredible knowledge that you are changing a child's future forever. How amazing!

With heartfelt gratitude,

Susana Eshleman

President

P.S. Nothing compares to meeting your sponsored child in person, learning about her everyday challenges and seeing her determination to reach her dreams. That's why we've included a special section (page 14) to help plan and dream about your trip. You've changed her life. A visit to see her will change yours! Enjoy!

When Night Falls

The challenges of living in poverty don't disappear at bedtime. Visit www.children.org/dream to view a photo gallery of the difficult conditions in which sponsored children spend their nights – and maybe better understand how the gifts of sponsorship help them keep their dreams alive.



John, 8, shares this bed with his three siblings. There is just enough space in the cramped room for his parents to lay out an identical mattress for themselves at bedtime.

Photo by Eduardo Uy Jr.

You Can Get Involved

Through a new donation program spearheaded by Lori Peikoff, a longtime Children International sponsor, you can help provide new beds for children and youth in Zambia. Learn more about Lori's story and how to make a donation to Operation Sweet Dreams at www.children.org/Lori.



Sweet Dreams Are Made With These

Until recently, at bedtime, María would climb into the old twin bed she shared with her two sisters. It was a tight squeeze. Waking to an elbow in the back and a crick in the neck was common.

So when María learned she would be receiving a new bed from the Barranquilla, Colombia, Youth Council, she was overjoyed. "Now I can sleep comfortably and wake up ready to go!" the 15-year-old exclaimed.

Children and youth in two Colombian cities have benefited from bed-donation projects organized by each city's CI Youth Council. Each council funded the projects using resources from their Youth Empowerment Funds. In Barranquilla, the Youth Council's "Sweet Dreams" program provided mattresses and frames to 111 sponsored children and youth in the community, while the Youth Council in Cartagena delivered sleeping kits consisting of a mat, fan and pillow to 60 young people.

With the new beds, the teens thought, young people would get better sleep, which would help them in school, offer more privacy and even prevent sexual abuse from crowding adults into beds with younger family members.

On the Edge of Despair

Tatiana would love to go to school ... if her mother could afford to send her

A community on the outskirts of San Pedro Sula, Honduras, seems to have been forgotten by the rest of the world. Unpaved streets are cluttered with trash and weeds. Public services are practically nonexistent. The quiet, almost pastoral, environment belies the abject poverty of its residents.

Here, in a tiny home perched on a ravine, 4-year-old Tatiana lives with her mother, Migdalia, and four siblings. The roof is made of old zinc sheets that are riddled with holes. During the rainy season, the family's few possessions are always wet. Tatiana and her brother are especially vulnerable to illness and disease from the damp, musty environment.

Tatiana's father abandoned the family. He sends money on occasion, but his work as a bricklayer is sporadic. Migdalia washes clothes to earn some income but still brings in only about USD\$20 a week.

Quick with a smile and full of youthful energy, Tatiana is an adorable chatterbox. At such a young age, she should be blissfully unaware of how truly desperate her living conditions are. But when asked if she is looking forward to attending school, her face falls and her voice loses its happy chirp. She says she doesn't believe she will be able to go to school because her mother can't afford the shoes that are required to attend.

Her mother sadly agrees. "Money is never enough to buy food, medicine when they are sick, or clothes, shoes and school supplies. I don't know what I am going to do when all of them are in school."

Midgalia's heart is breaking because she has so little to give to her children.

But once Tatiana is sponsored, she will receive the educational support she needs, as well as medical care, clothing and shoes. Tatiana's greatest needs will be met – and a mother's burden will be eased.

Tatiana needs your help

Bring Tatiana back from the edge of despair. Help us find a sponsor for her by sharing this issue of *Journeys* with family and friends and encouraging them to visit our website, www.children.org, or call 1-800-888-3089. You'll be helping not just Tatiana but thousands of other children who are still waiting for assistance.

Article by Gretchen Dellett. Photos and reporting assistance by Jesús Almendárez.



Tatiana's home is perched on the edge of a ravine.





Connie (right), a CI program graduate, serves as a community relations and women's advocate for the National Police Commission of Rapu-Rapu Island in Tabaco, Philippines.

Daring to Dream

Our programs are designed to provide the tools needed to fight poverty, but it takes courage to find the kind of success that CI program graduate Connie achieved

Wearing a crisp, light-blue uniform, Connie stops to chat with two women as she walks to work. As a police community relations advocate, it is her duty to uphold the image of the police force while fulfilling her oath to protect her community. She proudly bears those responsibilities.

The 25-year-old Children International program graduate is an officer for the National Police Commission of Rapu-Rapu Island, Tabaco, Philippines. Her beaming smile shows how grateful she is to have found success and to have attained her dream of helping others.

But reaching that dream? That's another story.

Helplessness in poverty

Growing up on the rural, tropical island of Batan, Philippines, life was difficult for Connie, the youngest of five. No matter how hard her family and neighbors worked, it was never enough for them to get ahead.

Connie's father and older brothers spent their mornings at sea, and she and her mother walked for hours throughout the village trying to sell each day's catch. Their efforts earned the family about \$120 a month. But bad weather, which could linger for days, often made fishing impossible. With no fish to sell, the family had to borrow money from relatives or neighbors to be able to buy food.

With finances so limited, the family’s home – a tight fit for seven people – was in a constant state of disrepair. Built with wood and palm leaves, the structure leaked excessively when it rained. Termite damage caused it to lean to one side. “Each time there was a typhoon, my brothers and my father would literally hold down our house,” Connie says.

“Poverty was my motivation. All I could think was that we could have a better life if I could complete the training.”

– Connie, program graduate and police officer in the Philippines

Despite these challenges, Connie was steadfast in her studies and took full advantage of CI’s educational and youth development activities. She knew the alternative to an educated life was a future of limited job opportunities that would never provide enough income to break the cycle of poverty.

So, at 17 years old, just after graduating high school, Connie made a bold move – one many relatives and neighbors considered foolish and naïve. With very little money and almost no plan, she relocated to the mainland to pursue college.

“It was now or never,” she explains. “If I waited until I was financially ready, I might end up too old. Or I might never save enough to get me to college.” So, despite seeing only a slim chance of achieving her dream, Connie decided to risk what little she had to go for it. Almost immediately, however, city life proved more challenging – and expensive – than Connie had anticipated. Doubt soon consumed her. “I knew that I was aiming for the moon.”

CI provides new hope

A month after arriving in the city, Connie was barely surviving. Searching for ways to support herself, she discovered CI offered funding for students unable to pay for higher education. Desperate, she used the last of her money to purchase bus fare for

the journey to CI’s Tabaco City community center to apply for a HOPE (Helping Overcome Poverty through Education) scholarship. She was so broke that she couldn’t spare a single peso for food. By the time Connie arrived, she was famished.

“My hands were shaking while I was filling out the application form,” she recalls. “The staff thought I was nervous and told me to relax, but I was shaking because I was hungry.”

A CI staffer immediately prepared a nourishing bowl of oatmeal. Grateful for their kindness, Connie completed the application and returned home. Days later, when she got the news she had been granted the financial aid, she felt overjoyed. “It was as if my life suddenly became wonderful,” Connie says.

Because the scholarship covered expenses such as tuition fees, food, lodging and transportation for two years, she could focus solely on studying. “My dream of earning a college degree from Bicol University became so near, I could almost see myself wearing a graduation robe,” she says.

Although Connie had originally planned to go into nursing, too much competition in the field prompted her to focus on another career. She decided to apply to the National Police Commission.

(continued ...)



In her role on the force, Connie handles crimes against women and children. She says she feels honored to be able to serve and protect her community.

Connie and her fellow cadets endured 10 months of rigorous training.



“I always dreamed of helping others,” she explains. “I wanted to be an instrument of justice. It is my dream to have a world that is fair and peaceful.”

For nearly a year, Connie endured grueling training: nonstop exercises in extreme weather, swimming in filthy ponds and jogging nearly 10 miles carrying a 22-pound bag of sand. The officer trainees slept in their uniforms most nights and were taught to go hungry – an experience with which Connie was already far too familiar.

“I felt as if I shed tears of blood each day at the training field,” she says, “... we were taught to have the strength and stamina of beasts.”

Tension ran high every day. Many of her peers failed, and many quit. But their lack of success only made Connie more determined to persevere. “Poverty was my motivation,” she says. “All I could think was that [my family and I] could have a better life if I could complete the training.”

In 2012, Connie graduated from the police training and was given her first assignment – patrolling the streets of downtown Legazpi City.

Making dreams a reality

Most children like Connie, who live in the harshest conditions imaginable, abandon their dreams of becoming professional athletes, doctors, lawyers or performers in their teen years. After all, when you are barely surviving – struggling to afford even the basic necessities like food, water and shelter – hopes and desires are quickly crushed.

But youth in Children International’s programs are given the tools to succeed. For Connie, the Youth Leadership Training and gender-sensitivity seminars ultimately enabled her to put those skills to great use as an advocate for women.

Today, Connie is a police community relations advocate in charge of cases related to crime and violence against women and children. “I find it a great honor to be able to serve and protect the women in our community,” she says. She hopes to continue her career in law enforcement and aspires to move even higher up the ranks. She also would like to start a family of her own, knowing now that her children won’t face the same desperate poverty she experienced during her childhood. ■

Article by Ashley Puderbaugh. Photos and reporting assistance by Eduardo Uy Jr.

From Poverty to Profit

CI youth is recognized at United Nations-hosted summit

Money isn't everything. But it certainly can be a powerful resource ... especially when impoverished children and youth are taught how to harness it. CI's Social and Financial Education program has taught participants how to open savings accounts, launch microenterprise projects, coordinate community-improvement activities and more. Recently, three entrepreneurial standouts in our financial literacy program were chosen as finalists for the 2014 Child and Youth Finance International Youth Award at the UN-hosted summit.



Dilnasheen creates crafts to sell.



Diana, 17, Ecuador, honed her leadership skills through CI's programs and led a successful project to create a jewelry club. She and others learned to make necklaces, elected leaders, sold their wares and distributed half of the profits equally among all participants. The other half went back into the business, making it a successful and sustainable model.



Jessalyn, 18, Philippines, utilized the full potential of CI's program by becoming a social and financial education instructor in her late teens. Jessalyn also managed a unique food-vending project called Sticks & Straws. Youth learned about food preparation, budgeting and customer service, selling food (which customers eat with skewers, or "sticks") and beverages (hence the "straws").



Dilnasheen, 19, India, learned to make crafts to sell at a neighborhood market. She also used her training to conduct a market survey, which helped her determine that demand existed for craft products in her community. Knowing it would cut down on costs, she chose to use recycled materials. By involving peers in her business, Dilnasheen created meaningful work for others.

Children International's Social and Financial Education program offers sponsored kids valuable training that can change their lives and positively impact their communities. To learn more about these programs, visit www.children.org/FinEd.

Where Books Go, Learning Follows



CI programs and youth champion literacy around the world

Sponsored youth Francine, 12, grew up in one of the poorest and most crime-ridden communities in Lusaka, Zambia. She never could have dreamed that one day she would be chosen as the face for all children and youth in her country. Francine was recently selected as a “Let’s Read Zambia” ambassador by the Ministry of Education. Due to declining literacy rates, the government created the initiative to encourage children and youth to read, stay in school and focus on their studies.

The young leader started early with her aptitude for reading. She surprised everyone, including her mother, when – at just 2 years of age – she was able to read “Cinderella” out loud.

“Francine’s appointment [as ambassador] has not just come by accident but due to the fact that she was fortunate to have been part of early childhood development classes at the Children International [community center], as well as the well-stocked library with academic books, novels and computers,” says Jacqueline, her mother.

Her teacher nominated

Francine, and since her role was announced, she has participated in reading programs, promoted literacy levels in schools and communities, met with government officials and appeared on national TV and radio stations campaigning against illiteracy. “My role is to educate my fellow young people in and out of school and formulate a habit of reading different types of literature, which will help their reading skills,” she explains.

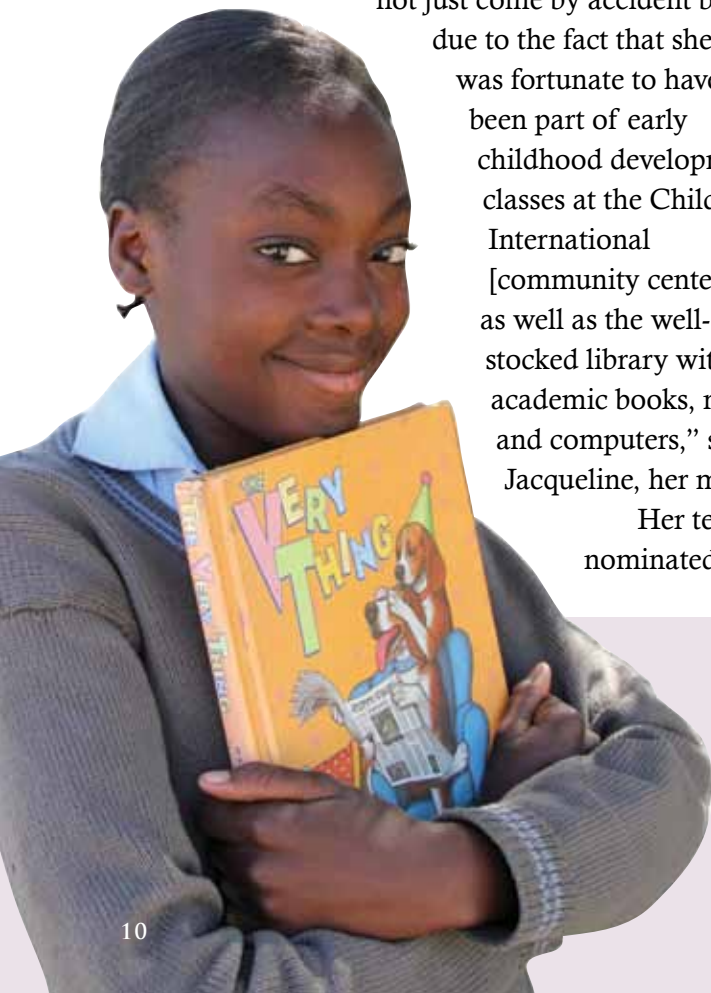
Francine is on her way to building a better future for herself, as well. She starts each day in the library, reading and working on her homework before school. One day, she dreams of becoming a physician.

From shipping container to much-needed library

When the staff for Children International’s Gifts in Kind program in Kenya arrived at work one day in 2013, they discovered a 40-foot shipping container had mistakenly been delivered to the office. But they didn’t see a giant, hollow hunk of steel; they saw an opportunity. They saw a library.

The director negotiated to buy the container at a low price and arranged for it to be transported to a nearby community where it could be put to use for hundreds of impoverished children.

Today, the shipping container has been retrofitted with shelving, storage, furniture and equipment and holds more than 2,200 books. At a recent three-day reading event hosted by Children International, children from 10 local schools participated in reading



“I encourage them to read at least one book per week, and by the end of the year, they will have read dozens of books,”

– Francine, sponsored youth



Children International has established reading tents and a container library in underserved countries, like Uganda and Kenya.

activities, face-painting, drawing and games.

The event was attended by Kenya's Ministry of Education Secretary Leah Rotich, who acknowledged the benefit of the container library and reading tents in a televised interview, saying that most of the primary schools in Kenya lack functional libraries. "To have it like this means that many schools can access the materials to develop their skills in reading ... This is the way to go," she said. She added that she looked forward to future partnerships with Children International for curriculum reform.

During the same interview, Ester Ndirangu, Kiambu County Education Executive, said, "What they have learned today I can assure you is more than what they have learned in their own classrooms."

Teachers attending the event said they would be repurposing Children International's curriculum to encourage reading at their schools.

The container library is just one of the initiatives completed through CI's community literacy program, which operates in 20 countries worldwide, including remote regions in Kenya and Uganda.

Books on wheels bring joy and learning

"Everything begins with knowing how to read

and write," says Jeffrey, a high school student and sponsored youth in Manila, Philippines. "So we thought it was a good idea to bring the books closer to those who want to read." Jeffrey is one of 30 youth who participate in a book-cart program operating in areas where children can't easily access libraries.

When the book carts roll through the neighborhood, local children gather around, eager and curious. The books aren't the usual kind they've seen before; these are mostly story and activity books with colorful pictures and interesting ideas.

"They are always excited when they see us with

(continued ...)

Thanks to the effort of CI staff, this shipping container was transformed into a library for poor children in Kenya.





“Everything begins with knowing how to read and write.”

– Jeffrey, sponsored youth

our books,” says Jeffrey. “We give them a chance to read, listen to others and express what they understand from the stories. There was one boy who was very noisy He even pulled our shirts to get to him and teach him the words he could not read.”

Jeffrey describes himself as shy when he was younger. But through CI’s youth programs, he’s learned how to become more outgoing – a better leader. Although he lives in a deeply impoverished community, he aspires to a better life.

“I can say most, if not all, people in our community dream of a better life,” Jeffrey says. “Many work hard. But somehow, they do not have the education needed to get to their dreams.”

At 18 years old, Jeffrey will be the first of his family to go to college, where he plans to study education and become a teacher.

Rewriting the stories for the next generation

Through CI’s educational programs, we are giving sponsored children and youth the resources to change their futures. Our community literacy efforts expand that platform to tens of thousands of other impoverished children and youth around the world, bringing the power of words to the next generation. ■

Article by Julie Stutterheim. Photos and reporting assistance by Kapulu Manjimela, Joel Abelinde, Audrey Hamayanda and Community Youth Reporters.

Jeffrey (second from left), along with other youth and CI staff members in the Philippines, organized a book-cart program to help educate children in the local community.





Word Power

When children learn to read and write, they harness the power of words. With your help, Children International is working to improve global literacy, changing the world for the better. Through our literacy programs, impoverished children are building a love of reading and learning, which can mean more educational and employment opportunities in the future. Visit www.children.org/our-work to learn more.

A global view of literacy



774 million people ages 15 and older cannot read or write; two-thirds of them are female.



250 million primary school-aged children lack basic reading and writing skills.



57 million children do not go to school; half of those live in Africa.

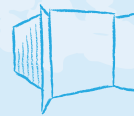
How is Children International helping rewrite stories for the next generation?



Libraries and computer labs in community centers



Reading tents and book-box libraries in remote areas



Mobile and shipping container libraries in underserved communities



Reading programs and library staff training

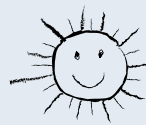
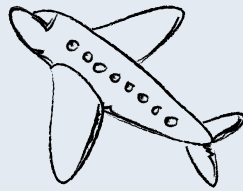
CI community literacy programs

20 countries worldwide

Help more than **8,000 schools**, libraries and community centers annually

Distributed more than **17 million books worldwide** since 2000

The Trip of a Lifetime



How to prepare for an experience that will change your perspective – forever

The wait to board the plane seems endless. Preboard preparations are excruciatingly tedious. Then you have to endure many hours of being confined to your chair, leaving your mind (and bottom) numb.

Finally, the captain announces it is time to prepare for landing. And while you've been waiting weeks – even months – for what's to come, your heart gives an unexpected tremor of anticipation. Because, while a tropical paradise awaits most of your fellow travelers, your destination will be far removed from their beach resorts and fancy hotels. And while they will eventually head home with sunburns and souvenirs, you'll leave with something far more valuable: a cherished connection from finally meeting your sponsored child in person.

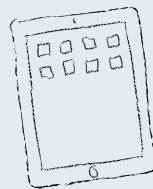
Light-weight, breathable clothes

Look for clothes made from wicking material and wear layers to be prepared for changes in weather.



Journal or tablet

Go old-school and bring a journal to record your memories or choose the high-tech option with a digital tablet (such as an iPad).



How to prepare for a visit

Contacting Children International is the first step to planning your trip. Call or email Sponsor Services as far in advance as possible (ideally six to eight weeks) with your travel arrangements and accommodations. Our in-country staff will immediately begin the process of preparing for your visit, such as contacting your child's family, sending you a list of possible activities for you and your child, and arranging an itinerary of the day's events.

Anticipating that first moment of meeting

Many sponsors feel a range of emotions when they first meet their child, from pure happiness at the momentous occasion to tears of despair upon realizing the true hardships their child endures. Whatever emotion you experience, don't be surprised if your child doesn't reveal any outward sentiment. In some countries, openly expressing emotions is culturally frowned upon. Rest assured, however, that your child is just as excited (and apprehensive) as you are.

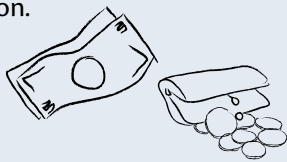


Smartphone

Contact your cellular provider about international data plans or wifi options like Skype to avoid unexpected charges when the next bill arrives.

Currency

Research currency exchange rates and check out websites and apps for the most up-to-date information.



Passport and visa

Make sure your passport is up to date and get your travel visa (if required).



Comfortable Shoes

Pack a durable, closed-toe pair of shoes to handle uneven, mucky and sometimes rocky terrain.



Typically, your first meeting will take place at your child's local community center where you can present any gifts you've brought. Next, where possible, you can visit your child's home, go shopping at the mall or pursue other activities. Some sponsors choose to spend the whole day with their child, while others simply meet for a brief time before saying a heartfelt good-bye.

One thing is certain, though: You and your sponsored child will remember this special experience for the rest of your lives.

We're here to help!

To learn more about visiting your sponsored child, contact Sponsor Services at 1-800-888-3089 or children@children.org. You can also log in to "My Account" at www.children.org and visit "My Social Center" to chat with other sponsors about their experiences visiting their children. ■

For more information about planning for your trip, visit www.children.org/trip.

Article by Jimmy Mack.

A Conversation with Joel and John

Former Navy SEAL and Discovery Channel star Joel Lambert answers questions from John, his sponsored child

You may have seen former Navy SEAL Joel Lambert as he works to evade some of the world's best military and law enforcement tracking teams on Discovery Channel's "Lone Target" (also known as "Manhunt"). But did you know that he is also an advocate and supporter of Children International? Joel has traveled all over the world and witnessed real

poverty firsthand. But after visiting the Philippines and seeing CI staff and programs in action, he believes hope exists for change to happen. Joel has sponsored John, a 15-year-old youth in the Philippines, for more than four years. John had some questions for Joel about being a sponsor, and Joel was happy to respond:

John: *Why did you choose to sponsor a child, and how did you choose me?*

Joel: When I was in the SEAL team, I was active in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program. When I got out of the Navy, I wanted to do something like that again, but I wasn't sure what exactly. I was introduced to Children International by one of the program's outreach workers who approached me on a Los Angeles street. When she asked me who I wanted to sponsor, I said, "a boy from the Philippines," and I got you, John. It's been one of the best decisions I've ever made in my life. I was so excited to get that first letter from you ...

John: *Is it difficult to be an actor and a sponsor at the same time?*

Joel: Not at all. Sponsorship is so easy that I feel like, no matter where you're at in life, it can be done. It costs so little to make a difference in another's life. We all should look at how we can accomplish that. Kindness is free. Spread that stuff around.

John: *What is the most important lesson your parents taught you?*

Joel: Wow ... there are so many. I think the most important thing they taught me, probably unintentionally, was to [work hard] for everything. I wasn't given everything. I was loved, taken care of and supported, but I had to earn things I wanted. I didn't like it at the time, but as I've grown older, I've found that we are at our best when we struggle. The greatest aspects of our humanity come out when the way is steep – not at the top of the mountain.



ON HIS OWN
IN "LONE TARGET," A DISCOVERY CHANNEL SERIES, STAR JOEL LAMBERT TRIES TO OUTFRAN A MILITARY OR LAW ENFORCEMENT UNIT IN EACH EPISODE.



Joel and John enjoyed spending the day together during one of Joel's recent trips to the Philippines.

John: *Were you happy when you visited my home? How did you feel?*

Joel: I had just finished filming the Philippines episode of "Lone Target" when I visited you, and I was exhausted, dehydrated and very drained. But visiting you in your home and meeting your family was hands-down the BEST day of my trip! Seeing my letters and photos in your house, along with items that I had been told were purchased for your family through sponsorship benefits, really brought it home for me. I was humbled to meet all the CI workers who accompanied us and see the amazing work that they're doing, as well as their passion and commitment. Even though your English isn't very good, and my Tagalog is nonexistent, I had such a great time with you! I loved meeting all your brothers and sisters, as well as your mom and dad. We took a lot of pictures, didn't we?

"Even when it seems impossible, and it will, just keep putting one foot in front of the other, no matter how small the step. You're gonna change your world."

—Joel Lambert, Sponsor and Discovery Channel Star

John: *Is there any advice that you want to give me?*

Joel: Trust yourself. You have everything you need, John. Even when it seems impossible, and it will, just keep putting one foot in front of the other, no matter how small the step. You're gonna change your world!

See the full Q&A between Joel and John online. Visit www.children.org/Joel. ■

Article by Jimmy Mack.

Photos and reporting assistance by Joel Abelinde.

‘My Destiny Is My Responsibility’

It takes more than financial hardships to keep this sponsored youth from fighting for a prosperous future

Each morning began the same for 17-year-old Wiliam and his father. The two would set out for the day – Wiliam taking a bus to the Children International Into Employment training center, and his father taking to the streets of Villa Canales, Guatemala, in search of masonry work.

In Villa Canales, surrounded by mountains and forests, yet just minutes from the most developed sector of the country, work often comes in the form of temporary jobs, such as day labor, construction, carpentry and agriculture. But in April, their routine

changed. Wiliam’s father and older brother were laid off from their construction jobs – a situation that hit the family of six especially hard. Typically, when the two had completed excavating a construction site, they continued doing other jobs for their employer. This time, however, they were simply let go.

Wiliam gravely recalls the night of the layoffs. “My brother looked very worried; my father looked angry but quiet,” he says.

And Wiliam felt flooded with guilt. He knew that, while his brother and father had been working every

Wiliam, age 5



“It [is up to] me to become someone in life, and I will do it for my family and for myself.”

– Wiliam, sponsored youth and Into Employment graduate



day for the family, he had been completely focused on school. “I felt that everybody was looking at me at that moment,” Wiliam shares. “I felt that I had the responsibility to help. I was earning no money. Anguish didn’t let me sleep that night.”

Finding his resolve to help

The following day, Wiliam sat down with his parents to discuss the situation. He explained that the last thing he wanted was to be a burden and offered to quit the Into Employment training program to help the family.

But he had misread his family’s thoughts. His father immediately reassured him. “The worst error is to go out to look for any job just because it is urgent to bring in money,” he told Wiliam. “What you have to do is finish the courses. And, with those tools, you will look for a good job. Because, with bad jobs, situations like the one we are facing now will always follow you.”

Those words of support had a profound effect on Wiliam. Already an eager student at the top of his class, Wiliam resolved to work even harder in school. Today, Wiliam’s goal is to become a chef, so he has focused on customer service and food-handling training. He also has taken classes in computers and information technology, hospitality and administrative assistance, which will be important skills for eventually gaining employment.

Persevering despite financial difficulties

The family was still struggling to make ends meet when we spoke to Wiliam a few months later. Although his father eventually found another job in construction, a dislocated collarbone took him out of work just a month after starting. The family currently is relying on aid from Wiliam’s grandfather.

Even in the face of continued financial hardships, however, Wiliam refuses to lose hope. He still dreams of one day becoming head chef in a top restaurant, eventually going on TV to share his recipes. But the most important thing is giving back to his parents, whom he credits for encouraging him to move forward despite their circumstances.

“I realized that what I want for me depends on me. I understood that my destiny is my responsibility

and no one else’s,” Wiliam says, confidently. “A little support is the only thing you need, and I received that support here, thanks to Into Employment and to Children International. Now it [is up to] me to become someone in life, and I will do it for my family and for myself.” ■

Article by Ashley Puderbaugh. Photos and reporting assistance by Javier Cárcamo.

Wiliam walks with his mother, Reina, down the steep muddy street where he grew up.





Where Do YOU Keep Your Sponsored Child's Photo?

We asked sponsors to share details on Facebook about where they keep photos of their sponsored children. Check out the familiar – and special – spots where they choose to display these cherished images.

Article by Jimmy Mack.



Richard Surwillo On my work desk. Meivelyn is staring at me as I type this, smiling.



Jodie Gyalog Yazvec All my kids get their own special frame proudly displayed in my in-home office on a very special antique table.



Corinne Spermon-Miskowsky On my refrigerator with pics of my son and family ... people always ask about the pic, and I tell them he's my sponsored child.



Carol Luber Right at my breakfast table. Reading the paper, cup of coffee and Liliana and Luigi from Honduras are right there! Hola amigas!



Sharon Weston On my bedroom wall at home - last thing I see at night and first thing I see in the morning - all 12 of them!

Hope, Health and Home

With your support, CI programs are driving change – both on a personal level and communitywide – across the globe



Hope for the future of all our sponsored youth

Through our HOPE (Helping Overcome Poverty through Education) scholarships, we encourage youth to complete higher education and better their lives. CI offers scholarships of up to \$500 per year for up to two years of secondary school, university or vocational training programs. Last year, we awarded 2,247 scholarships, and 87 percent of the recipients completed their studies.



In good health in Kolkata, India

Good health, nutrition and protection are crucial to ensuring all children achieve their maximum physical and psychological development. In Kolkata, our medical staff performed 31,260 medical exams for children, youth and volunteers last year. In addition, more than 25,500 individuals made getting healthy a priority by attending health-education sessions.



Cleaning the community in Manila, Philippines

Our Youth Leadership Training program develops communication, decision-making, conflict resolution, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. As a final project, program participants implement a community-service project.

In Manila, Philippines, the teens created “Bottle for Change,” a cleanup drive involving nearly 450 youth. Not only did the participants beautify the area, but they also raised funds by selling the recyclable waste. “We shared the money we earned from selling the plastic bottles,” says 17-year-old Christine. “We used it for activities like storytelling for children. We bought notebooks, pencils and erasers for children who could not afford them.”

Article by Ashley Puderbaugh.

The Art of Leadership

Learning meets fun in this innovative youth program

Becoming a leader requires learning how to juggle responsibilities and priorities. And, for some youth, leadership involves actual juggling!

An innovative approach to Youth Leadership Training in Mexico makes learning leadership skills fun and engaging by integrating the arts.

While the intensive training originally was designed to develop communication, decision-making and critical-thinking skills, the staff added an incentive – one in which many teens were interested: the opportunity to learn, practice and perform a variety of artistic skills.

Fifteen-year-old Diego was initially inspired to get involved when he watched youth performing circus tricks in his neighborhood. But the lessons he learned went further than mere juggling.

“In the leadership sessions,” says Diego, “I learned how to be a good leader, because a leader

doesn't think about himself. He thinks of other people and how to lead a whole team ... to be better.”

Both the leadership and the arts courses are open to all local youth, regardless of sponsorship. This is an important part of building participation and morale, especially in underserved communities like those in and around Guadalajara.

Arts activities include theater, dance, circus skills and music. For every two-hour leadership training session they complete, participants earn two hours in one of the artistic workshops of their choice.

Globally, more than 3,500 youth completed the training last year; nearly 60 percent of them were young women. On average, participants spent a total of 53 hours in leadership training.

Article by Deron Denton. Photos and reporting assistance by Azucena Gollaz.

Thanks to the presence of the CI community center in Guadalajara, youth have a safe place to learn, play and engage with positive peers. Diego (right), 15, shows off his talent for juggling.





World of Change



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Children International prepares children and youth to escape the traps of poverty by supporting their critical needs, building resilience and engaging them in transformative activities.

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With your help and their dreams,
we can change the world.

Photo credit: Eduardo Uy Jr.