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# BLESSING THE CHILDREN POST



## Caring for the Orphans & Widows

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## SELF-SUSTAINABILITY

Recently I saw an interview on a late night show here in Ethiopia. What intrigued me was not the usually humorous nature of the show, rather one of its guests. Bethlehem Alemu is the dynamic founder and owner of SoleRebels, a game-changing shoe company in the heart of Addis Ababa, the ancient capital of Ethiopia. Due to her success and ingenuity, "Fortune" magazine has placed her on top of its cover. She has also been featured by CNN and the BBC, in addition Forbes has named her one of Africa's Most Successful Women.



The ladies working on their beads.

and joblessness looms. This can also be an example for BCI's push toward self-sustainability for its families. That is why, in a clear understanding of empowering families, some BCI missionaries have recently held an event that has illustrated what can be done with simple resources such as pieces of paper.

The events main theme was to empower BCI women in income generating schemes and was dubbed as the first of its kind to ever be held by BCI. The event was organized by

Blessing the Children - Ethiopia and a team of missionaries from Portland, Oregon. During the event the missionaries illustrated to the attendees how to make necklaces and bracelets from pieces of paper, string, and glue. The attendees received the training enthusiastically and saw it as a positive start toward self-sustainability. The event left a feeling of possibility and encouragement, despite different obstacles. The women have learned that with some imagination they can take the little resource that they have in their surroundings and turn them into sources of income. Because of the training the women have also begun a regular meeting to share ideas and develop their creativity.



Some finished necklaces.

Amazingly, the source of Bethlehem's success is not gold or oil rather it is her imagination and creativity to turn old tires into designer shoes and sell them all over the world. For most of us an old tire is nothing of value, something to be thrown away. But for this creative lady and her company it is a treasure; a multi-million dollar treasure that has changed the lives of many.

Bethlehem's success is a classic example of innovation at its best. It can be an example for many Ethiopians and it is an important raw model in a country where resources are scarce



Deanne conducting the training.

The training has also proved that our mothers are willing to roll up their sleeves and fight for self-sustainability. It is also a lesson that, with a little help, self-sustainability is achievable. Therefore we would like to express our deepest gratitude for Team Portland; even though they have left Ethiopia their positive impact lives on.



**KEITH V. STRAWN**  
FOUNDER & PRESIDENT

Dear friends,

Please join us in this edition of the Post for a story about our partnership with Kids Against Hunger - Monmouth and the blessing that will result! On the cover you'll find an article about the benefit of some previous team members and how they left a lasting impact.

Inside you will also find the life changing experience of a long term missionary from the Netherlands!

Thank you for your support and continued prayers. Because of you, we are touching lives in Ethiopia.

Abundant blessings,

# LIVING MY DREAM

A MISSIONARY'S EXPERIENCE BY MARIANNE H. FROM THE NETHERLANDS

*This story was written by Marianne H., a missionary from The Netherlands who spent one year volunteering with Blessing the Children.*

It is late at night as I write this. I should have been asleep a while ago but my mind refuses to rest. The last several months of my life have been like a rollercoaster of happenings; feelings, thoughts, experiences, opportunities to learn, adventures and impressions.

About two months ago I was standing at the airport in Addis Ababa as I gave my Ethiopian family one last hug. No one likes goodbyes but this one was unexplainable. For almost a year, I had the privilege to work in the country that is guilty of stealing my heart. And all too quickly, that year flew by and the time came to go home and leave it all behind. It was scary because I was letting go of everything I had known for the last year. I didn't know what I was going home to, what kind of life would I find back home and how would everything be after such a long time. No house, no job, nothing. Let me take you through a small portion of my big journey.

This story is about how I lived my dream and I hope it encourage you to take the step to your own dream.

The reason I came to Ethiopia is a very long story so I will shorten it. When I was a little girl, 6 years old, my parents involved me in their ministry in East Europe. At that time, there was a lot of poverty there. One day they took me to an orphanage for disabled children, where I handed out some of my own toys to the kids. I will never forget that moment even though it was 18 years ago. I can still see those poor, abandoned children who were neglected by their parents



Marianne with Meheret, a disabled child in the BCI Program.



Marianne with her class at the BCI Academy.

due to the shame of having a disabled child. Their sad faces and underdeveloped bodies were wrapped tight in car seats or on beds. It made a huge impression on me, the injustice of their situation. Their innocence in it all. It never left me.

When I was a teenager I did several short term mission trips in summer. I started to feel God's calling for me to contribute something into poor people's lives, to increase their standard of living. When I was in College I followed a minor in Development Corporation, did an International course and graduated in Social Work by doing research in South Africa. I started working, but God kept telling me He had something else for me. Then God

gave me a vision and the main thing I took away from that vision was to 'color lives with hope'.

Years ago someone told me to get myself more color. It took me a while to understand this. I didn't show a lot of myself to other people, I didn't shine. I was insecure and hiding myself. Nelson Mandela once said: "And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others." By getting yourself colors, by shining and using your talents and personality, you can bring colors in someone else's life!

Once I understood this, I wanted to contribute. I wanted to give children the chance to develop and get out of the circle of poverty. I wanted to bring colors in their lives, I wanted to bring hope and dreams. During my stay in Debre Zeyit, I watched this movie called live58, about poverty. A boy in the movie who was interviewed said that he didn't have dreams. He said it is better that I do not have dreams, because they will never come true anyways. This makes my heart cry. It is not fair. I have all the chances in the world yet so many children have zero chances.

I came to Ethiopia as a Social Work intern which means I would work with the social workers full time. But God had more, beautiful things planned for me. An art teacher was needed at the BCI Academy. I always said I wouldn't teach. But during my thesis I did research about school drop outs and became interested in education. Talk about how God plans our lives and prepares us for every single thing!

"Well, since I like kids," I thought "I'll just try it."

Join us in next months post or check out our blog to read the conclusion of Marianne's experience.

# UPDATE: 142,560 NUTRITIOUS MEALS

Some of you may remember our article in the May issue of the BCI Post about the opportunity we had to partner with Kids Against Hunger - Monmouth to send 142,560...

Can you imagine how much food you would need to cook a meal for 100 children?

Now imagine being able to provide a healthy, nutritious meal for 100 malnourished children – over 1,000 times. That is over three years worth of meals for 100 children!

Blessing the Children has been given the amazing opportunity to partner with Kids Against Hunger to ship and distribute a 20' container packed with 142,560 meals to Ethiopia.

Blessing the Children currently has a child sponsorship program supporting 154 children but there are so many more children in Debre Zeyit and the surrounding villages that are not receiving support. The need is endless.

With these meals, we will be able to provide a lifesaving blessing to the children and families in the Debre Zeyit community and surrounding villages who we are unable to reach with the sponsorship program.

The specially formulated Kids Against Hunger meals contain fortified soy protein, dehydrated vegetables, rice, and vitamins and minerals. Although the meals are chicken-flavored, they are actually vegan and have a shelf life of up to 3 years. The container has been fully packaged by the KAH satellite in Monmouth, IL and is ready to go!



4 of 10 pallets being sent to Ethiopia.

Dan and Wendy Allaman, founders of Kids Against Hunger - Monmouth, have had a strong desire to do more for the children of Ethiopia since their first visit in 2010.

For this purpose, they started their own Kids Against Hunger satellite and began packaging meals. It was soon discovered that until BCI was established as a local NGO in Ethiopia - a process that was begun several months before hand - it would be impossible to get a container of meals cleared through customs.

In October of 2012, BCI received its local NGO license and a



Dan loading the pallets into the container.

few months later preparations began for the food container destined for the BCI ministry in Debre Zeyit. In May of 2013, the container was packed and ready to go.

After five months of fund-raising for shipping costs, organizing, phone calls, emails, international communication and paperwork, Kids Against Hunger - Monmouth (KAHM) and Blessing the Children (BCI) felt prepared to send the shipment.

Generally, sending food containers to other countries is simple but not with Ethiopia. Much paperwork and documenting is required and if it is not all provided, the container can be held in the storage unit, collecting storage fees. Very few have attempted to send food containers to Ethiopia, and even fewer have been successful in getting a food container to clear customs.

Prior to sending this container with Blessing the Children, KAHM sent a container to Zambia and another to Haiti. Dan commented, "I don't know why it is so difficult to do good things in Ethiopia. When we shipped to Zambia we didn't have to jump through any hoops, just sent the containers and they arrived ok."

With this container on its way to Ethiopia, we praise God for this amazing opportunity and ask you all for your prayers that we will be successful in this venture. The benefit of accomplishing this will be amazing!



Dan signing the container paper work.