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Caring for the Orphans & Widows

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WWW.BLESSINGTHECHILDREN.ORG

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BCI MISSION TRIP SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST

A mission trip is an amazing, life changing experience. Not only do you get to work with children and families in need, changing their lives but you'll also find your own life changed in the process. This experience is like nothing else you will ever do in life; helping and serving people who could never repay your kindness and generosity. It is a truly selfless act. Which is why we are so excited to offer you all a chance at a mission trip scholarship to make your trip more affordable!

Blessing the Children has received a generous gift from a donor for the express purpose of assisting individuals who have a desire to serve with Blessing the Children in Ethiopia.



Open acceptance for essays began January 14th and will end March 14th, 2014. All essays should be submitted to Trips@BlessingtheChildren.org with the subject line "BCI Mission Trip Scholarship Essay".

Happy writing!



With this donation, Blessing the Children is offering three scholarships, each worth a \$1,000 grant towards any mission trip taken in 2014.

To apply, you must submit an essay. Essays should be no longer than 800 words expressing your call, passion and vision for going to Ethiopia. You may express what you'd

like to accomplish during your time in Ethiopia, what has prepared you to make such a trip, what is leading you to serve in foreign missions and any other information that may be beneficial in helping us chose the best candidates.



KEITH V. STRAWN
FOUNDER & PRESIDENT

Dear friends,

Please join us in this edition of the Post to see how the Children's Christmas Program turned out! On the cover you'll find an article about our Mission Trip Scholarship Contest and how you can apply.

Inside you will also find the conclusion of a 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 is the conclusion to the story written by Marianne H., a missionary from The Netherlands who spent one year volunteering with Blessing the Children. To see the first part of this story, visit our Wordpress blog.

<http://blessingthechildren.wordpress.com/2013/10/21/this-is-it-right-now-i-am-living-my-dream/>

From the day I started, I loved it and I never stopped. Of course, it was challenging. To be honest, there were days that I came back home, went to my room, cried and asked God why He didn't make changes in the lives of these children. I was never a teacher before. I had no training or experience and at the beginning, I didn't know their language. There were some large classes and their behavior was really challenging. Back home I used to work with kids that had behavior issues but this was harder for me, a whole new level of challenging. Even though it wasn't easy, I loved it. God gave me big love for these kids.

I was able to watch my children grown for a whole school year. To build relationships with them, have lots of fun with them, challenge them to be creative, to think outside the box, teach them social skills through my classes, see their self-esteem growing. And most important, I was able to help them to just be children, to dream and to have hope. When I was teaching, it was so precious to see my kid's faces during class when they created something and were proud of their accomplishment. I would almost forget that after school some of the children would go back to their mud huts and sleep on the floor with an empty stomach. I hope it also helped them to forget. I cherish the moments that we had fun and did crazy things. These children stole my heart. Not just a piece, but the whole thing!

My big, life changing journey was intense and challenging, but amazing! I can't wait to see what else God has in store for me! I want to challenge you to take the steps you need to take, to follow your dream but more important, to be obedient to God. Sometimes while in Ethiopia, I found myself thinking: "This is it, right now, I am living my dream." I made myself a promise. I will not to



live my life for myself, not let my life be a grind and live for work, money and a big house. It is worth it to take risks and to overcome challenges, so you can shine and let others shine. Our world needs people to color it and to bring hope!

When God puts something in our heart, when God gives us a dream, He never said it would be easy. Let me share one last thing. Through it all, God has been so unbelievably faithful to me. He has taught me how to trust Him more, how to be patient and listen to Him. I can tell you how amazing it all was but really, there were times I felt like driving to Addis Ababa and taking the first flight home. And at those moments I really wanted to do that! It is not always easy to live in another country, far from your loved ones, working with people from a different culture, having no power or water for days, having no privacy, encountering lots of challenges in simple, daily things. But whenever it was tough, God took care of me. He picked me up and as Psalm 40 says, He set me back on a rock and put a new song in my mouth. He showed me that when He asks something of us, He will provide and take care of us. So there is no excuse for us to hold back and not to obey God. Get yourself a color. Take a risk, set a step, shine and make someone's life more hopeful.



CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

January 4th was no ordinary day for the children in the Blessing the Children program but they had yet to know it as they arrived to the BCI Academy for their normal activity day, unaware of the excitement that awaited them. Ethiopians celebrate Genna, Christmas, on January 7th so we decided to surprise the children with a special Christmas program on Saturday, January 4th. The day approached and excitement was in the air as all of the social workers and staff members had been preparing for the big celebration day for the children. Christmas decorations, Christmas tree, presents, food and a special Christmas message were all prepared because of the generous support of donors who wanted to share the joy of Christmas with children who live thousands of miles across the ocean in Debre Zeyit, Ethiopia.

As the children arrived on the buses, the BCI staff was busy putting the final touches on the Christmas tree decorations and presents. Four women were hired to prepare the meal and they were hard at work in the kitchen. The children entered the BCI Academy and were greeted by the smell of a hot meal and all of the lovely decorations. The joy, happiness and surprise on their faces was beyond measure. You could feel the excitement as the children looked around, taking it all in.

The objective of the day was to share the joy of Christmas with these children, children who otherwise wouldn't have had the opportunity to celebrate with gifts, decoration and delicious food. This also gave us the opportunity to share with these children the greatest gift of all: Jesus. It was a day in which we remember the love of our heavenly Father that brought us Jesus and with Him came joy, happiness and abundant



Christmas meal.



The children waiting for the program to begin.

blessings.

The program began with prayer and worship songs. Worship songs were sang in both English and Amharic, celebrating our king and Savior. After praise and worship, a special message was shared by our National Ethiopian Director, Pastor Tadesse.

After hearing the word of God, the children were set up at a table with craft

supplies and shown how to make Christmas trees and ornaments. With much gusto, the children began letting their creative juices flow by cutting and decorating. Once they were done, they were divided into groups and took turns using their decorations to decorate each other like Christmas trees. The activity was very entertaining for both the children and adults.

After the craft and game was done, the children sat down and relaxed to watch a short nativity film. Following the film was the traditional bread cutting ceremony. The bread, called "defo", is made in a large circle shape and is only prepared for special ceremonies and holidays. Our bread was made in five different colors: green, red, orange, yellow and plain.

Once the bread ceremony was finished, a lunch of warm, delicious lamb stew (called "wot" in Ethiopia) was served. As the program was finishing up, the last activity was for the children to receive their presents. Each boy received a watch and each girl received either earrings or a tiara.



Decorating each other like Christmas trees.

Being able to provide this special Christmas Program has been a blessing to the children and also to us, as we had to opportunity to share the love of Jesus and the joy of Christmas with these children who couldn't have appreciated it more.

Thank you to all the donors who made this program possible! We couldn't have done it with out YOU.