



jitegemee

\jee-teh-geh-may\ v [Kiswahili:sustain yourself]: empowering street children through education.

Letter from Jitegemee by Michael Kimeu

This year, we are celebrating many accomplishments. We marked 10 years of a steadily growing program. We moved to a new building, where we have classrooms, a mini-library and offices. We built a kitchen and began a lunch program for our students. We have an active advisory board of local professionals who have been instrumental in the planning and implementation of our programs.

But perhaps the most exciting development has been the graduation of our "pioneer" class of vocational students. They have already completed more

than one year of apprenticeship, and they are ready to take the next step in life. A survey



Kiloki Kĩlu enjoys a hot lunch from Jitegemee.

of all 22 graduated students shows that 68% of them are currently working, and more than half of them are earning enough to significantly increase the household incomes of their families or their guardians. 91% want to start their own businesses. Nearly half of this class is now serving as mentors for the next class of vocational scholars. Our graduates are training the new students under the supervision of an experienced artisan. This is a big step toward our dream of making children self reliant, and of children giving back to others. Now our biggest

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My Life in Jitegemee by Michael Muthoka David

Life has been hard right away from my childhood. I used to live with both of my parents. When I attained the age of six years, they took me to a nearby primary school, where I was enrolled in class one (1st grade). By then my father was a drunkard with no source of income and he was not able to pay my school fees. My mother worked as a casual laborer and with the little she earned, she bought us food and paid my fees. Sometimes when dad came home drunk, he would beat mum mercilessly, making

her leave us and go back to her parents. We could starve of hunger because my dad never cared for us. Many times, I would run away from home and go to the streets, where after selling scrap metals and getting some little money, I could pay my school fees. The rest of the money would buy food for myself and my baby sister. After a long stay my mother would come back and join us.

One day when dad came home seriously drunk, he raised a quarrel with my mother that

ended up in a serious fight. She packed up her belongings and swore never to return to that home again. I followed her with my sister. By then I was in class eight (8th grade). After doing my final examination, despite of all the problems I faced, I scored a total of 414 marks out of 500. Unfortunately, my mother had been ill for years and the sickness was to its climax. She could no longer work to feed us and by the end of that year she passed away. No one could pay my school fees and

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2006 Events

October 21, 2006

10th Anniversary
Boston, MA

November 4, 2006
Washington, DC

Spring 2007
Samba in Concert
Boston, MA

If you would like to attend an event, please email us at info@jitegemee.org.

For more information, please visit www.jitegemee.org

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challenge lies in preparing these youth for their next step in life: toward better-paying jobs or businesses of their own.

The vocational program this year has been greatly supported by two new grant sources, Safaricom Foundation, the non-profit arm of a cell phone company in Kenya, and Child Relief International, a private family foundation. Gifts from these donors also made it possible this year for us to serve hot lunch to our primary school children and vocational scholars. On behalf of the board members, staff and the children, I am pleased indeed to thank all of our generous donors!

This year, we also celebrated the graduation of our first high school student. His grades were good enough to qualify for a government college. We have three children in Standard 8 (8th grade), who are preparing for the biggest test of their lives this fall to determine whether they will get into sec-

dary school. Our primary students are a very good group with lots of potential for higher education.



Jitegemee students at the 10th Anniversary celebration

One challenge we faced this year is how to prepare our secondary school students for life after graduation. We are now beginning a program that will give these youth a chance to

work at unpaid internships during their vacations to give them more direction.

We always have new goals. This year, we hope to hire a new staff member who will concentrate on helping children to prepare for college, jobs and secondary education. We would also like to establish local fundraising strategies to supplement the efforts in the United States. And finally, we want to create a computer lab where the sponsored street children can have access to computer training.

Jitegemee's progress this year, and every year, comes from the generosity of friends like you. Thanks to all of you who have helped us get to where we are today. We hope that you will think of us as we go forward into tomorrow. **d**

"Jitegemee's progress this year, and every year, comes from the generosity of friends like you."

A Trip to Africa by Pearlle Hemdane

As a child growing up in rural Mississippi, I always dreamed of traveling to Africa. My mother and father used to tell my siblings and me about how our ancestors came from there long ago. I wanted to visit that distant place from which our ancestors were stolen. Books and films did not satisfy me. I wanted to see Africa with my own eyes.

This May, I got the chance. My niece Farah Stockman founded Jitegemee, and for the program's 10th anniversary, she invited me and 19 other family members and friends to visit Kenya. The journey was more rewarding than I could have imagined.

We flew from Atlanta to Amsterdam, where we con-

verged with cousins, sisters, nephews and family friends for the 8-hour flight to Nairobi. Most of us had never been to Africa before. Some of us had never left the United States.



Janel Dancy, one of 20 Americans who visited Jitegemee this May, meets primary students.

From the moment our plane touched down in Nairobi, we were met by a whirlwind of colors and sounds. We visited the Masai market - a vast, teeming place of exchange. Then we

went to the Go Down, a community of artists in Nairobi's industrial area where we saw sculptors, painters and dancers. We also met Jitegemee's children and teachers there for the first time. They had made the hour's journey on a school bus from the rural town of Machakos for a day of art activities.

I was so impressed with the children, who painted and acted out short dramas based on their interpretations of the art around them. They seemed to hang on to every bit of instruction, their bodies often leaning forward so as not to miss a single word.

Two days later, we set off in Star Travel vans for the town of Machakos, where Jitegemee's new school was waiting for us. The children welcomed us with clapping, singing and dancing! I was overwhelmed. Inside the school building, the youth in vocational training assembled and we shared greet-

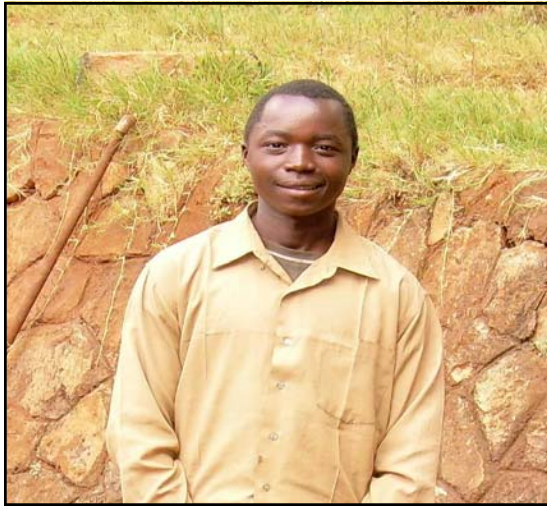
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my dream of becoming a doctor began cascading away.

I then moved to the streets completely to support my family. Life was not easy there; we looked for leftovers in the garbage. People hated us and when we tried to beg them money they mocked us. The police arrested us claiming we were robbers and thieves. In order to get money, we sold scrap metals and plastics which earned us very little. I bought glue and other drugs with the little money I earned and the rest bought food for my young sister.

One day as we were resting in our compound, two men came to talk to us, whom I later learned were teachers. They explained to us how they could help us mold our future and invited us to their working place. The next day they explained to us more about the job they do and that the program they work for deals with street children. Later they provided us with lunch and asked us to be going daily. Some of the

street children ignored the idea but I went there because I knew there was help.



Michael Muthoka David is enrolled in Jitegemee's vocational training class.

Soon I was enrolled in the vocational class as the time for continuing with my education had gone. This was in June 2005. I was so happy because someone had come to my rescue.

In this class where my life began changing positively. I stopped sniffing glue and abusing drugs. I quit the street and became a disciplined and responsible person who can be dependable. All this was because of the lessons we learned and the counseling we received from our teachers. It is also in the class where I changed my dreams of becoming a doctor to an electrician. I chose the profession because I love the job and it earns a lot of money. I am so grateful and happy with the program for providing us with tools, which makes the job easy to learn. I also appreciate the lunch it provides for us so that no one starves of hunger.

My future plans are to be a professional electrician and to own my own workshop, which would earn me a lot of money, and then I would help my younger sister and my father. I would also help my friends who are still in the streets because I love them so much. I am so determined that I am sure I will make it. **d**

(Continued from page 2) - **Trip**
ings and information about our lives in America. The children stood to tell us their names and the trades they were learning. Their faces shone with enthusiasm as they vied for our attention. They filled my heart. These youth had not been as fortunate as many other children, yet they were eager to share all their best with us. I felt so welcome. Later in the day, we set off for town to see the shops where the students trained in dressmaking, hairdressing, knitting, cabinet making, furniture making and mechanics.

"I was so impressed with the children...They seemed to hang on to every bit of instruction."

But I had grown tired and began to lag behind the group. Immediately, a tall slender girl slowed her pace

and looked back at me. "You are tired" she said. "I will help you." She linked her arm with mine and entwined our fingers as we trudged up the little hill leading from the school. Suddenly I no longer felt tired. This is how I met Cecelia, a student dressmaker. Moments like that defined this trip for me.

The next day was the long-awaited celebration. Everyone seemed bright and shiny as we gathered for breakfast. There was a hush about the school. A giant tent had been erected in the school yard with chairs underneath. In the back, mothers and guardians of Jitegemee children had prepared enormous pots of stew for lunch. The children arrived in colorful new Jitegemee shirts they had been given the day before. We were joined by a group of children from an orphanage near Mount Kenya and nearby visitors from the Christian Children's Fund. As more children and guests arrived, the hush

gave way to an air of excitement and anticipation.

Mike Kimeu, the program director, and Terry Mutuku, the chair of our advisory board, soon took the microphone, introducing the day. Teachers Alex and Elizabeth led the children in poems, songs and dances. Local dancers donned beaded black outfits, pounding drums and singing songs that called each one of us out to dance. I took the microphone with my two sisters and our brother to sing an old gospel song that we used to sing as children in church. We sang one verse in Swahili. The crowd fell silent with listening.

A few days later, a plane lifted us out of Africa, back to all the American cities that we came from, back to our ordinary jobs and ordinary lives. But I had finally made it to Africa, and I knew that I had left behind the spirits of my ancestors who had now traveled, full circle, back home. **d**

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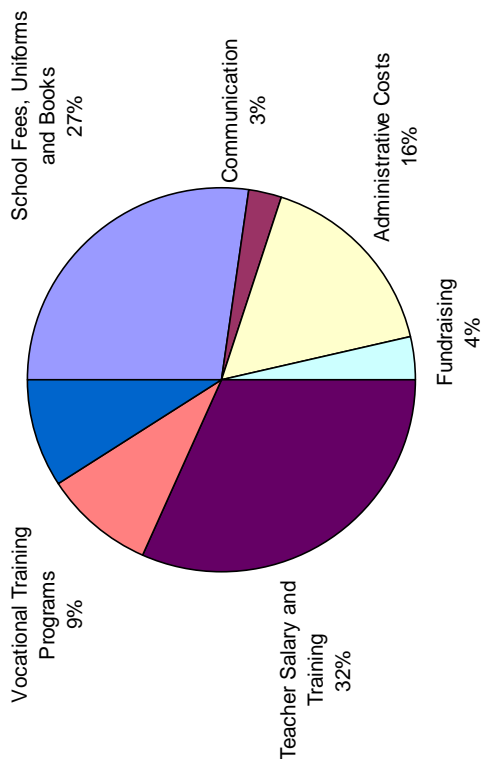
jitegemee

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Jitegemee

Program Expenses 2005

Feeding, Medical and
Other Programs
9%



Total 2005 Expenses: \$30,085
Total 2006 Budget: \$52,632

2005 in Numbers:

Number of children sponsored to elementary schools: 33
Number of children sponsored to high schools: 14
Number of children sponsored to vocational training: 56
Percentage of students in the top third of their class: 34%
Direct expenses per elementary student served: \$73
Direct expenses per high school student served: \$395*

Goals for 2006:

Outfit our new headquarters with furniture and tools
Send 6 new students to elementary school
Continue sponsorship for every child that excels on the high school entrance exam
Assist in sending our first high school graduate to college
Support our vocational scholars in apprenticeships
Provide tools and start-up capital for graduating trainees
Sponsor 25 more boys and girls for vocational training

*Includes one-time purchases made by first-year students.