



2024 Gloucester County Public Employees Charitable Campaign

TESTIMONIALS

Seniya, 22, is a member of a **CARE** Youth Village Savings and Loan Association group. With the money from CARE with the support from Beiersdorf she was able to buy herself some goats and chickens which she raises and sells. "I have fourteen chickens, but only seven of them lay eggs, because I cannot afford to feed them properly. Sometimes I go to hotels and ask them for the guests' leftovers to save money on the feed for my animals," explained the 22-year-old. She sells one egg for 10 Ethiopian Birr (around 17 cents). Some of her income she saves for a girls' savings group which CARE, with the support of Beiersdorf, has established to support girls' businesses, give training, and spread awareness on different topics such as early marriage. Seniya is one of the money box key holders in her group of thirty young women aged between 18 and 24, and she held a VSLA group session in the courtyard of her home, discussing early marriage. When asked who was married before the age of 18, half the girls raise their hands. When asked who had an early marriage proposal, but was able to deny it, the hands of the other half went up – including Seniya's. Seniya had her first marriage proposal when she was 16, but she and her mother refused. "I am the oldest of nine siblings. I learnt from my mother and friends who married early and had children with difficult deliveries with a very hard life. That scared me. So, I said no. I did not want that for myself," she explained. Seniya's mother Nujuma, 35, was married when she was 15 and had Seniya at 16, when she herself was still a child. "Being a mother or a wife is not just about having children. I want to be able to be a parent to my child and not have to grow up together with my own children. This young you do not even know how to breastfeed properly and giving birth is so dangerous. I also want to protect my younger sisters from marrying early," said Seniya. "I only have a little income. I sell papaya on the street. Sometimes, when I am very desperate, I go knocking from door to door to try and find someone who will buy something. It is very difficult work." her mother, Nujuma described. "I work hard, but it is not enough for all of us. When we buy clothes, it is on loan. And we also cannot afford enough food for everyone." Seniya and her mother often skip meals, so the other children can eat first. "But with her business we are surviving, and she has so many plans for the future. She is our strength." (**CARE ~ Global Impact**)

After hurricanes Bertha and Fran struck Wilmington, North Carolina, in 1996, teams of volunteers responded to help with cleanup and repairs. In doing so, one group assigned to help repair homes of low-income and older residents discovered there was an issue bigger than the natural disaster: substandard housing. That discovery led the group to start Wilmington Area Rebuilding Ministry (WARM) to address the living condition needs of their community. Its mission is to help repair and rebuild homes and make them accessible so that homeowners can remain self-sufficient and live with dignity and independence. Many of the homes WARM repairs are those of veterans like Willie. Willie, whose last name is being withheld for privacy, is an Air Force veteran who has been in his home more than 30 years. He's legally blind due to optic nerve damage in both eyes but wanted to remain independent. This was challenging because his bathroom and laundry room subfloors had significant damage, likely from termites and water. It was dangerous for him to navigate his home. He turned to WARM after being denied loans for the repairs. WARM volunteers responded to his request, making the repairs at no cost to Willie. Because of their work, his home is once again safe for him to live in. Funds from the **DAV Charitable Service Trust** provide restoration and home repairs for ill and injured veterans, like Willie, and their caregivers. WARM has expanded over the years. What started in three counties is now in seven counties across the Cape Fear region. Services include wheelchair ramp construction; grab bar installation; flooring repairs; plumbing improvements; appliance installation; roof replacement; and heating and air conditioning repairs.

WARM staff assists homeowners with the eligibility and application process, determines needs, and ensures repairs meet building codes. Veterans assisted by WARM are referred to other area resources and services, if needed. With the support of a generous public, often through workplace giving campaigns, the Trust will continue to support organizations and programs that provide ill and injured veterans and their families access to safe housing. **(Disabled American Veterans DAV Charitable Service Trust)**

Ronnie, born wild in Asia in 1966, endured the common fate of many circus elephants—captured as a young calf, separated from her family, and transported to the United States for circus performances. Acquired by the Hawthorn Corporation at age nine in 1975, Ronnie spent three decades in circus acts, enduring confinement in dark barns and chains when not performing. In 1993, following a lengthy USDA investigation into the Hawthorn Corporation for Animal Welfare Act violations, Ronnie found refuge at The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee. Arriving on February 7, 2006, shortly after Asian elephant Minnie and before Asian elephant Billie, Ronnie and her companion, Asian elephant Debbie, joined The Sanctuary as the fifth and sixth Hawthorn elephants relocated from Illinois that year. Constant companions, Ronnie and Debbie explore their habitat daily, splashing in the many ponds and mud wallows, with Ronnie often leading the way. Referred to as the "tie that binds" the Q Habitat Herd, Ronnie fosters connections with Debbie, Minnie, and Billie through frequent interactions and shared experiences. Each year, to celebrate Ronnie and the others on the anniversary of their arrival, Care Staff meticulously craft enrichment items using an array of her preferred foods, including vibrant red melons and fragrant hay. The Sanctuary's Staff also gather not only to witness Ronnie, Debbie, Minnie, and Billie celebrating but also to commemorate one another, acknowledging the challenges overcome and the remarkable care provided to each individual elephant over the years. **(Elephant Sanctuary ~ America's Best Charities)**

Histio survivor and Scholarship Recipient, Nate shares, 'As someone who has journeyed through misdiagnosis to a life-saving bone marrow transplant, my mission is to turn my experience with Hemophagocytic Lymphohistiocytosis (HLH) into a powerful force for change. The Histiocytosis Association has provided me with invaluable resources that have allowed me to grow and deepen my understanding of histiocytic disorders and develop skills and personal connections with other patients and families that are so vital in our shared fight against this rare and often overlooked disease. **(Histiocytosis Association)**

In 2024, the **Kingsway Education Foundation** awarded \$23,250 in scholarships to 24 deserving students, helping them pursue higher education without the heavy financial burden. These scholarships opened doors to new opportunities, enabling students to focus on their academic dreams and future careers. This investment in their potential exemplifies our vision to successfully prepare students for their unique path in life and our continued commitment to excellence in the Kingsway Regional School District. **(Kingsway Education Foundation)**

Lucinda was rescued as a pup in 2020. She was entangled by not one, not two, but three fishhooks—one was lodged in a flipper, another hooked on her tongue and the last was embedded in her stomach. Thanks to caring people like you, our veterinarians had the tools needed to perform a life-saving disentanglement surgery. And after about a month of care, Lucinda was released back to her ocean home. Harbor seal Lucinda You'll be happy to know that even though she was once entangled, she's now thriving in the wild. How do we know? Lucinda was recently spotted in Sausalito resting on a floating dock! More than two years after her release, harbor seal Lucinda is looking healthy and thriving in the wild. On behalf of Lucinda and marine mammals like her, thank you for being an ocean hero! **(Marine Mammal Center ~ America's Best Charities)**

Tajeir is a 7 year old youth who enrolled at the **Martin Luther King Center** when he was 5 yrs old. He could barely read and had low concentration when working on his homework. As he went into the next grade it was very difficult for him to complete even a single page of homework. We spoke to his teachers at school and his mother about his problem. His mother made an appointment with his doctor and found

out he had attention deficit. We in conjunction with his parent and teacher partnered him with a dedicated volunteer who would come 3 days a week and sit with him in the separate room in a quiet area to study with him. She reviewed his work assignment and together they would complete it. With the help of the volunteer slowly but steadily Tajier learned and improved in his work. Some days it is still a struggle to remind him over and over the process of understanding his work and he loses concentration, however with consistent help and guidance by the volunteer (a retired school teacher) Tajier has moved up quite a lot, and has a positive attitude. When he successfully completes all his work he shows pride and shows off to all the teachers his completed work. **(Martin Luther King Youth Center Inc)**

On a day that is intended to bring a family joy, the birth of Akekapop "Ake" was met with unforeseen sadness. Ake was born with a cleft condition. His parents were rice and cassava farmers. They neither expected his cleft lip nor knew how to treat it. Samai, Ake's father, thought his son would be subject to painful bullying, fearing that Ake would develop an inferiority complex. With many misconceptions surrounding cleft in low-income countries, members of his family believed that a cleft condition was bad luck. Yet, it wasn't long before Ake's family discovered **Operation Smile** Thailand. Following their bus ride to reach the surgical program site, Ake and his family met more parents and children affected by cleft. These interactions helped make them feel more confident that Operation Smile would take care of their son. Prior to his surgery, Ake's family rarely took photos of him. Today, Samai and his wife said they proudly take many photos of him and his new smile. Samai attributes his son's happiness to the medical volunteers who devote their time and skills to changing the lives of children like his son so that they can be treated with kindness and accepted by their communities. When asked if he wanted to say anything to Operation Smile, Samai said, "I was very happy that Operation Smile Thailand had a mission to provide free surgery. Earlier, I was very worried. Now, Ake got surgery and he's very happy. He would like to say thanks to medical volunteers and the Operation Smile team who help create smiles for Thai kids." **(Operation Smile ~ Global Impact)**

OCRA has invested \$122 million in private ovarian cancer research and helped to secure over \$3.8 billion in federal dollars dedicated to ovarian cancer research and awareness. Every new research grant we award brings us one step closer to a cure, and every survivor we reach through our programs offers hope for the future. **(Ovarian Cancer Research Association ~ America's Charities)**

Sawyer was one of 17 small dogs in a trailer. The pet parent had pancreatic cancer and had to go four months to a hospital for treatment. A son had to come to try to take care. The pet parent came back home to die and was crying and relieved when we were saving nine. A family member kept four and found homes for three. The very next day the pet parent let his body and soul go and died knowing his animals will be safe. **(PetSmart Charities ~ America's Charities)**

My name is Nokuthula. I am an intelligent young girl, aged 16. I am the eldest of six. My mother passed away in 2020, at a time when COVID-19 was at its peak. Unfortunately, we stay about [23 miles] from the nearby hospital, which made access to a medical facility difficult for my mom. When my mother passed away, it really broke my heart, I had to assume the role of a mother to my younger siblings. My home [in Zimbabwe] is [8 miles] away from school. Before the project, we resorted to staying in a makeshift boarding house near the shopping center to avoid walking long distance[s] to school from home. Life there was very difficult. We couldn't possibly study or do our homework because it would be very dark. Electricity was really a challenge then. Most of my time, I would support with daily chores at the bush boarding, as I was the big sister and my siblings were all looking up to me for support. I could not concentrate in class due to fatigue. My life was unbearable, but I had no choice. Against all odds, I passed my grade and enrolled in high school where I was selected to participate in [The Graduation Project]. My life has since changed and everyone sees in me as a healthy girl who is at peace. I enjoy comfortable nights now, as it is my first time ever to leave the mat and sleep in a bed. I am also happy to say that as a result of this project, I now have adequate water to bathe, which is at our doorstep. I no longer spend long hours fetching water for washing and cooking. The project drilled solar powered boreholes for us [to use

as a water source]. Before I came to this school, my confidence levels were very low. However, due to various [Plan] sessions, such as Champions of Child Protection, life skills and engineering classes, which we are going through with support from Purdue University. These classes have taught me a lot on leadership, participation and decision-making, and I have since gained all the confidence. My dream is to be a medical doctor when I complete university studies; I wish to come back and uplift my community as well as build a hospital and a pharmacy because people travel long distances to our local clinic. I know my mother will be proud of me even if she is in her grave, as before her death I promised her that I would do my best in school. The project has restored hope not only to me, but also for many girls in my community. Education was undervalued and regarded as less important in this community. Most parents preferred sending the boy child to school. Most parents presumed that the role of girls was to get married and bring wealth into the family. However, now their perceptions are transforming as the enrollment of girls at my school is increasing. ***(Plan International USA ~ Global Impact)***

Gifts to support all areas at **Rowan University** help prepare students like recent graduate Riley Fisher '24 to be the leaders of tomorrow in their careers, communities and beyond. As a first-generation marketing student and scholarship recipient, Riley recognized the importance of philanthropic support as she pursued her dream of a Rowan degree. "The donor funding for my internship at the Rohrer Center for Professional Development helped me receive real, hands-on industry experience pertaining to my major. During my time at Rowan, donors made it possible for me to benefit from new and meaningful opportunities and realize my aspirations of finding a job that combines my love for art and passion for marketing." ***(Rowan University Foundation)***

"The South Jersey Catholic Ministries Appeal is a campaign that provides not only help but also hope to thousands of people," said Msgr. Louis Marucci, pastor of Saint Andrew the Apostle, Gibbsboro, whose parish has seen the appeal support some of its more than 100 ministries. "The dollars raised meet some of the greatest needs of people in South Jersey," he continued, citing ministries that help in areas like health and addiction. "The generosity of parishioners supporting this campaign helps build the Kingdom of God in the Diocese of Camden." Father Joshua Nevitt, diocesan associate director of vocations, said he is grateful for the funds that help subsidize the budget for his office. "The generosity of donors to the South Jersey Catholic Ministries Appeal allows the diocesan Office of Vocations to run programs, retreats and discernment meetings that have the goal of helping young men to hear God's call," he said. "A gift to the South Jersey Catholic Ministries Appeal is an investment into the spiritual and sacramental life of all parishioners in South Jersey." ***(South Jersey Catholic Ministries Appeal)***

"Johnny was laughing the entire time and just beaming with happiness. He just showed us he's reached a lot of milestones, and it was an amazing thing to witness. We can't thank **Sunshine Foundation** enough for the absolutely amazing experience. Seeing what they do for families they have never met is inspiring and gives us hope. It was TRULY a magical week filled with joy, tears, laughter, love, and memories that will last a lifetime!" -Jonathan's mom
(Sunshine Foundation)