

AMAKURU

AFJHAR NEWSLETTER
FALL 2023

ONE DREAM

ONE TEAM



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

We are most grateful for your continued support of our work in Gashora, Rwanda. Your generosity improves the lives of and gives hope to so many children and families. Please enjoy this Fall 2023 edition of our “Amakuru” newsletter.

AFJHAR and Journey House Actions (JHA), our partner in Gashora, had a busy year. Rogers Kimuli, the JHA Executive Director, visited us in Milwaukee for three weeks in late June and early July. It was a great honor to see Rogers back in Milwaukee, where we first met in 2017. We are deeply grateful that over 150 of our friends, family, and supporters attended our “Meet & Greet” Reception with Rogers on June 28 at the Baird Conference Center in Milwaukee. It was a joyful evening of relationship building and storytelling.

Rogers and his team have done incredible work and blessed so many lives in so many ways since they formed JHA in 2019. As a major investor in their work, we share examples of recent activities, personal stories of transformation, and accomplishments in this newsletter, which are all made possible thanks to your kindness and generosity.

The JHA leadership team created a vision for JHA, and their artists illustrated it in a vision board. In 2023, their vision continues to materialize. AFJHAR funds JHA’s critical Food Basket program that buys rice, corn maize and beans to supplement the milk and vegetables produced on the JHA farm. Over 3,200 children and community members receive help from JHA’s nutritional programs. We can’t address educational needs and higher aspirations until we begin to satisfy people’s immediate physical hunger.



Recently, AFJHAR funded the drilling of a second well that will provide clean water to more than 6,000 people; construction of a second Early Childhood Development Center that will allow JHA to serve 300 more deserving children; construction of new boys’ and girls’ dormitories that will provide safety and loving homes to at least 72 children who experienced homelessness; and a new kitchen and dining area in a cleaner and safer environment for the JHA cooks.

Thank you once again for sharing in the journey with us!

One Dream. One Team!

Greg Herrle

President, AFJHAR

ROGERS' MESSAGE

Dear AFJHAR Friends,

First and foremost, I am so grateful and humbled by the efforts that everyone put in so that I had the chance to leave Gashora and come back to Milwaukee. Unlike my first visit to Milwaukee in 2017, I felt like I was coming home on a journey of gratitude. It was high time to say thank you for the water you made available to our little ones who never had access to clean water and for the milk made possible by people in the U.S. who have never seen me or our children. You were saying to me "Rogers, we trust you. Take on this journey. We want to help." Thanks to your beautiful souls, our little ones, who have been hungry for so many years, have something to eat at least two times a day.



Dr. Michele Bria with Rogers Kimuli



I will always remember the love and hugs shared with me at the "Meet and Greet" Reception on June 28 in Milwaukee by people who had never met me before. The smiles I saw that day will stay with me for the rest of my life. I will tell my children and grandchildren that there is a lot of love in Wisconsin based on the beautiful hearts I met at the "Meet & Greet."

Special thanks to all the families who gave me the chance to visit their families and homes during my visit. It gave me the understanding that even though I grew up in a very humbling situation, there are a lot of great people in the world who would allow me to visit and say, "you can lean on us." Even though there is a lot of hurting in the world, there are so many reasons for someone to smile. Families invited their children to share meals with me. I was humbled by the love and hospitality in the different families I met that it felt like I had been there for years.

I would like to thank the AFJHAR family and all the families who support our work in Gashora. You help us build a more hopeful community. Hope is what you sow in us, and hope is what we have. We hope too that someday you will bless us with a visit to Gashora.

One Dream. One Team!

Rogers Kimuli



WELCOME BACK ROGERS!

Rogers' first visit to Milwaukee occurred in 2017 when he spent four months at Journey House in Milwaukee's Clark Square neighborhood as part of a program sponsored by the U.S. State Department. After his return to Rwanda, he started JHA in 2019. We formed AFJHAR in 2021 to support and help fund the work of JHA in Gashora.

We invited Rogers to visit Milwaukee again in late June this year. The highlight of his visit was a "Meet & Greet" Reception at the Baird Conference Center. The ECAB Group at Baird generously sponsored the reception. More than 150 friends, family and donors attended the event on a beautiful summer evening (although smoke from Canadian wildfires limited visibility). Rogers presented JHA's vision for building an inclusive and self-sustaining community in Gashora, the impact of JHA on the community, and heartwarming stories of personal transformation and growth made possible by the benefactors of AFJHAR. During the reception, attendees were able to buy baskets and paintings produced by the talented artisans of Gashora.





Rogers was quite busy during his three-week stay in Milwaukee. The University Club of Milwaukee invited Rogers to speak at their enrichment series entitled “Rwanda, Rebuilding from Genocide, Lessons to be Learned on Building Unity from Division.” He visited a real-life Wisconsin dairy farm with over 5,000 cows, attended an in-person meeting of the AFJHAR Board of Directors hosted by Journey House, went on a cruise of the Milwaukee River and Harbor with a group

of “under 40” professionals hosted by Ali Kolb, attended a major league baseball game between the Chicago Cubs and the Milwaukee Brewers, attended Summerfest (“the world’s largest music festival”), hosted an event featuring Rwandan baskets and art at the La Gente Gallery in Milwaukee and spent a lovely day sightseeing in Chicago. Rogers stayed at a house owned and generously provided by Journey House of Milwaukee but spent many days and evenings on Wisconsin lakes visiting, dining, and boating with AFJHAR board members and their families and friends. Rogers definitely became “one of the family” during his visit.

MEMORIES FROM GASHORA

CHARLES BROWN
AFJHAR Board Chair

This past February I had the wonderful opportunity to visit JHA in Gashora, Rwanda. I would like to share a few of my impressions. Peaceful and quiet! The temperature was a consistent 84 to 86 degrees during the day and in the 60’s at night. It never really got hot considering Rwanda is near the equator. I wore long sleeves every day except one. Gashora is a beautiful place with tropical scenery and many lakes around it. For me, I could not get over how quiet it was. No noise like a busy city!

Many of you may have seen pictures and videos from Gashora and the JHA facilities and activities. The pictures and videos do not do justice to what it feels like to be there! The pictures do not capture the experience of walking on dirt roads, the sound of the birds, the feel of the air, and the smell and taste of Gashora. Being there gives CONTEXT and PERSPECTIVE! I highly recommend visiting if you can. I plan to visit every year as long as I can.

I would like to share one of the many observations from my visit – access to water! The need for water is critical to living and something most of us may take for granted. Thanks to your support, in 2021 AFJHAR helped fund a clean water well to support JHA’s operations in Gashora. The well provides water access 24/7 – 365 days a year to more than 5,000 people in the surrounding community.

Having access to water is one thing. Getting water to where it is needed and where one can use it is another thing. Most people in Gashora carry water by foot in 5-gallon yellow containers. Others move water by bicycle, four to six containers at a time. JHA employs three young men to transport water on bicycles from the JHA water grid to the JHA farm that is three miles away. Each of these young men separately carry six of the yellow containers on one bicycle from the grid to the farm ten times a day, every day to ensure the JHA cows have sufficient water. It is amazing to think about and even more amazing to witness it in person.

I encourage you to visit Gashora if you have the chance. It will change your life.

USM TEACHERS

This summer, after a year of researching Rwanda's history, politics, and culture, a group of five teachers from the University School of Milwaukee (USM) embarked on a 10-day trip. What we witnessed and experienced shattered our preconceived notions.

During our visit to JHA in the rural area of Gashora, Rogers Kimuli, the JHA Executive Director, deeply inspired us. With the support of AFJHAR, Rogers established a nursery school for 300 children and provided free meals twice a day for them. He firmly believed, "Children can't come to school with empty stomachs; they must be fed first."

Despite this remarkable achievement, 1,100 children in the community still lacked access to education. Rogers also initiated a small pig farm, which has since grown to house 125 pigs and provides employment for sixteen women and youth. He had also started a community dairy farm, expanding it to 49 cows and calves and offering jobs to 54 young people.

Rogers passionately explained, "My boys need an opportunity, any opportunity, to keep them off the streets, away from drugs, and out of gangs." Many of these boys expressed gratitude for the life-changing chances they'd been given.

Rogers didn't limit his efforts to helping boys; he also gathered women from the community to teach them various skills, from weaving African baskets to making

earrings, bracelets, and sewing sanitation pads. He believed that, just as free condoms were provided to boys for safe sex, girls should receive sanitation pads for menstruation.

Rogers' passion was contagious. As we peered through the window of their one-room school library, Rogers lamented the limited book selection. A collaborative book project idea emerged: USM students would interview Rogers' children, record their family and life stories, and transform their stories into books, which would then be printed and sent back to Rogers.

Rogers concluded our visit with a hummingbird story. The legend goes that during a massive forest fire, all the large animals fled from the forest, while only a flock of hummingbirds continued flying to the river, using their tiny beaks to carry water and extinguish the fire. Despite being ridiculed, they persevered until the fire was extinguished.

"Anything you do is an act of a hummingbird," Rogers declared, turning his gaze toward the sky, as if he were sending his hopes, wishes, and desires there.

Haiyun Lu
Mandarin Teacher
Capstone Project Co-coordinator
University School of Milwaukee



Rogers Kimuli with USM teachers

TRANSFORMING LIVES



JUVENAL NSABIMANA

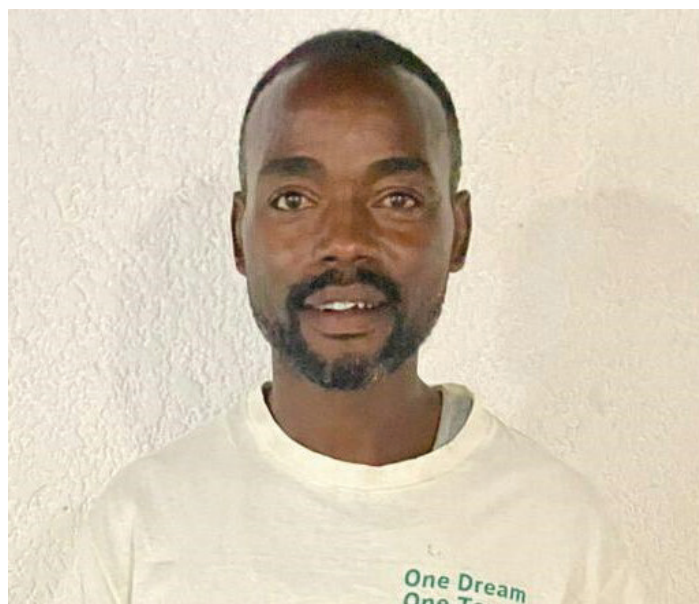
Juvenal lived as a refugee in the Congo and dropped out of school. JHA supported him to go back to school when he returned home to Rwanda. Juvenal is now in high school and is one of the students in the JHA art gallery. He is doing well in school and supporting his family. Juvenal is very good at painting landscapes. Art has helped him fight the trauma that resulted from his experiences in the Congo. JHA tries to support Juvenal in all possible ways and believes he will be another success story in the community.



MAURICE MUKUNZI

Maurice is a retired soldier and lived the life of a criminal in the community so he could feed his young children. Later on, Rogers Kimuli met Maurice in prison, realized Maurice was just trying to feed his family, offered him a job at JHA, invited him to transform his life, and became his mentor. Rogers believed Maurice could turn into something great within the community.

Maurice is now a security guard at JHA and is in charge of the gardens at JHA's "Journey of Success" Early Childhood Development Center. He teaches the children about gardening - planting, watering, and how to raise a crop so it grows into an edible plant. Maurice turned the school into a beautiful garden of vegetables. His children are doing well, and his wife works at the JHA piggery farm. Maurice said, "I never dreamed of a day when my children would wake up in the morning and have food every day."



PAULINE IRIBAGIZA

Pauline teaches weaving to the young women at JHA. When she first came to JHA she was looking for a sustainable way to support her family and feed her children every day. JHA knew about her weaving skills but told her they are not looking to give a handout but rather a hand up. JHA told her that if she would train the young girls how to weave, she would also be a reason for others to learn a skill. Pauline started with a group of 20 girls who all weave quite well. She expanded her team to about 50 girls and acts like a mother to the young girls.

Pauline can now support her own family and has learned cultivation skills to grow crops and reduce food insecurity in her home. Now she can pay school fees and health insurance premiums for her children, so they are no longer sent home due to non-payment. She is very grateful for JHA's support. Her perspective on life changed. She became more hopeful and optimistic that her children would finish school including university.



NEWS FROM THE FARMS



THE DAIRY FARM

The JHA dairy farm continues to be JHA's most successful workforce development project to date. The dairy farm now has 29 cows and 20 calves with the recent addition of the newest cow, Peanut, and her calf Pecan.

The farm has one busy bull and a full-time veterinarian responsible for the health of all the animals. The dairy farm employs 54 young full-time workers and many seasonal workers. JHA plans to continue to increase its herd both organically and with new purchases.

The dairy farm produces about 240 liters of milk each day, which provides daily nutrition to the three hundred students at the "Journey of Success" Early Childhood Development Center, several hundred non-students, and JHA staff members and volunteers. The elderly in the community receive ten percent of the milk.

THE PIGGERY FARM

JHA intends the piggery farm to be a major economic engine for JHA by breeding, raising, and selling pigs. AFJHAR purchased the first pigs in 2021 and thanks in part to investors from the Friends of Gashora in Canada, the piggery farm has grown to 125 pigs. JHA plans to grow the farm organically to 500 pigs.

Twenty-year-old Evode, with assistance from 18-year-old Justin, manages the piggery farm. Both young men were once living on the streets of Gashora, but JHA saved them, and they are now part of JHA's Young Leaders Group on a path to be future leaders of JHA. They attend school in addition to managing the piggery farm. Sixteen people work at the piggery farm with special focus on women and youth.



VEGETABLE FARM AND KITCHEN GARDENS

Thanks to an investment by AFJHAR, JHA purchased over six acres of farmland that allows them to grow cabbages, green peppers, amaranths, onions, tomatoes, and other vegetables. Sixteen-year-old Abdoul, under the general supervision of "Uncle Frank," manages crop production. JHA wants to increase the nutritional value of their students' diet by introducing more vegetables into their diet. Abdoul has also managed the construction of 63 kitchen gardens where individual families learn to plant and grow their own vegetables by their homes.

CURRENT PROJECTS

Thanks to the generous support of AFJHAR benefactors, several exciting projects fulfilling the vision of JHA are currently under construction and should be completed soon. Over 90% of the construction work is supplied locally, which created more than 350 jobs (estimated to reach 500 jobs) and will continue transforming the Gashora community.

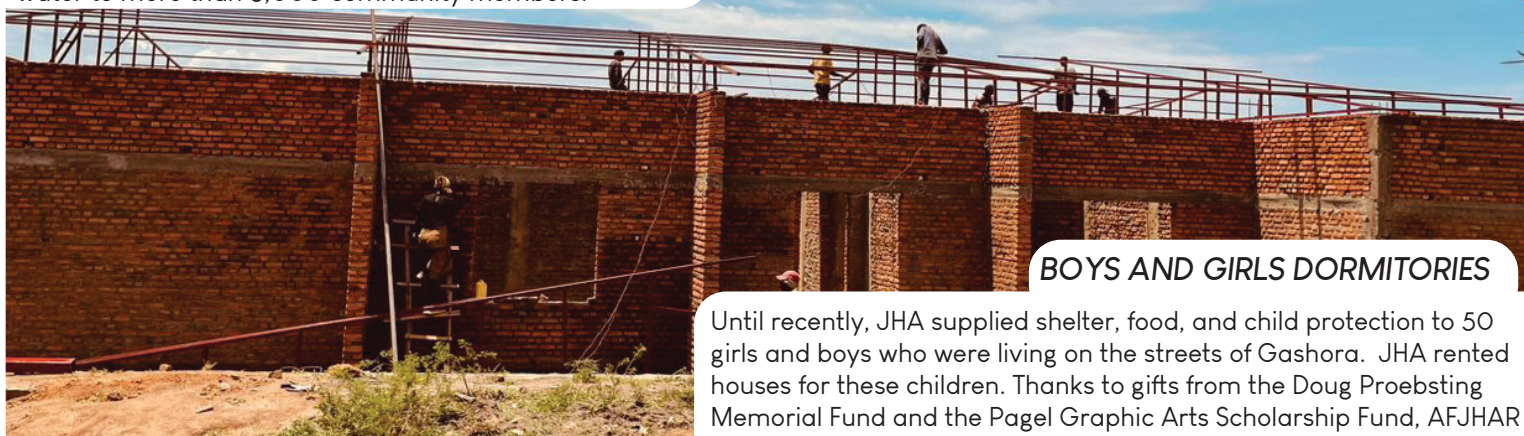
SECOND WATER WELL

In 2022, AFJHAR helped fund the first clean water well in Gashora that has served JHA's "Journey of Success" Early Childhood Development (ECD) Center and over 5,000 members of the Gashora community. Thanks to support from Badger Meter, Inc. and the Joseph Rauenhorst Family Foundation, AFJHAR recently funded a second solar powered clean water well and ten 10,000-liter storage tanks that will support JHA's new early childhood development center, the new dormitories and kitchen, and the JHA farm. The well will also provide clean drinking water to more than 6,000 community members.



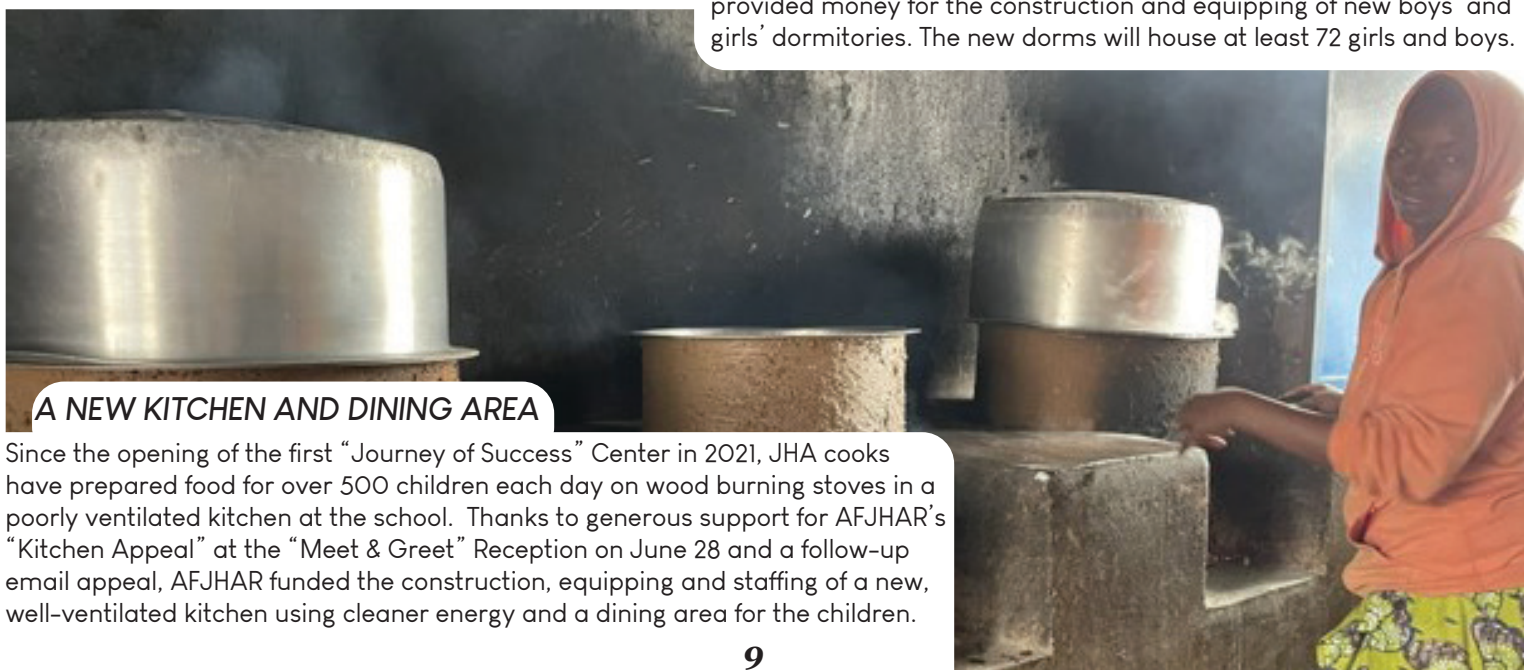
BOYS AND GIRLS DORMITORIES

Until recently, JHA supplied shelter, food, and child protection to 50 girls and boys who were living on the streets of Gashora. JHA rented houses for these children. Thanks to gifts from the Doug Proebsting Memorial Fund and the Pagel Graphic Arts Scholarship Fund, AFJHAR provided money for the construction and equipping of new boys' and girls' dormitories. The new dorms will house at least 72 girls and boys.



A NEW KITCHEN AND DINING AREA

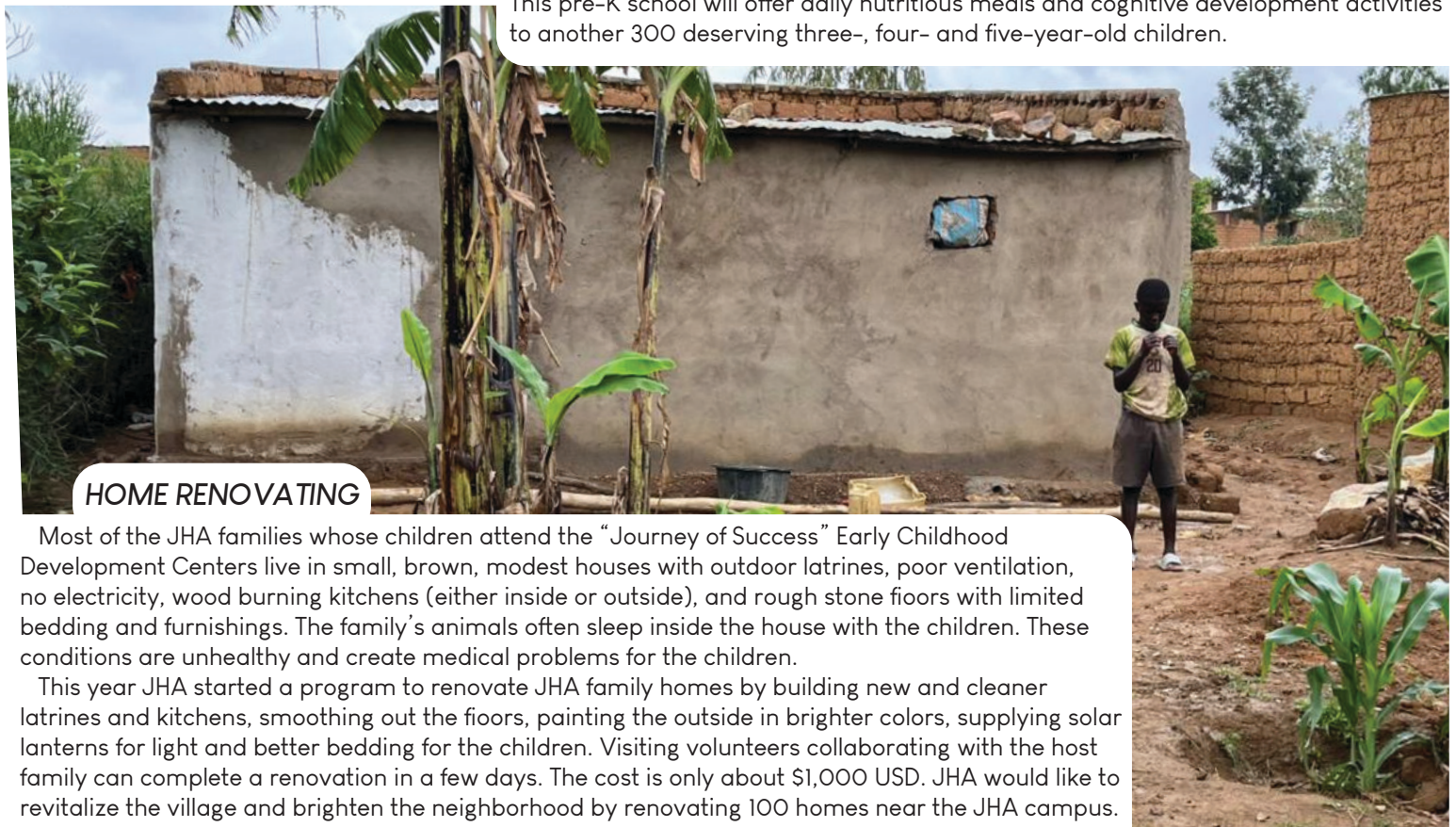
Since the opening of the first "Journey of Success" Center in 2021, JHA cooks have prepared food for over 500 children each day on wood burning stoves in a poorly ventilated kitchen at the school. Thanks to generous support for AFJHAR's "Kitchen Appeal" at the "Meet & Greet" Reception on June 28 and a follow-up email appeal, AFJHAR funded the construction, equipping and staffing of a new, well-ventilated kitchen using cleaner energy and a dining area for the children.





A SECOND "JOURNEY OF SUCCESS" ECD CENTER

JHA completed construction of its first "Journey of Success" Early Childhood Development (ECD) Center in early 2021. Thanks to a generous contribution in 2023 from the Ingui family from Scottsdale, AZ, AFJHAR funded the construction and equipping of a second "Journey of Success" ECD Center near JHA's new dormitories. This pre-K school will offer daily nutritious meals and cognitive development activities to another 300 deserving three-, four- and five-year-old children.



HOME RENOVATING

Most of the JHA families whose children attend the "Journey of Success" Early Childhood Development Centers live in small, brown, modest houses with outdoor latrines, poor ventilation, no electricity, wood burning kitchens (either inside or outside), and rough stone floors with limited bedding and furnishings. The family's animals often sleep inside the house with the children. These conditions are unhealthy and create medical problems for the children.

This year JHA started a program to renovate JHA family homes by building new and cleaner latrines and kitchens, smoothing out the floors, painting the outside in brighter colors, supplying solar lanterns for light and better bedding for the children. Visiting volunteers collaborating with the host family can complete a renovation in a few days. The cost is only about \$1,000 USD. JHA would like to revitalize the village and brighten the neighborhood by renovating 100 homes near the JHA campus.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Construction has been fast and furious this year at JHA as noted above. The JHA vision is coming to fruition, but not yet complete. Our next major project will be to construct a 10-bedroom guesthouse to house visitors and volunteers at JHA. The guesthouse will provide modest accommodation with private toilettes. It will be built near the new early childhood development center, dormitories, and kitchen along the beautiful shores of Lake Mirayi, and central to Gashora-area tourist activities like hiking, birdwatching, bicycling, and (hopefully someday) water sports. The guesthouse will be self-supporting, and supply needed operational revenue to JHA through modest daily room and board charges.

JHA is working on a solar energy plan with the goal of becoming energy self-sufficient. Gashora gets plenty of sunshine, which is ideally suited for solar energy. JHA is working with solar energy experts to develop the plan.

HOLIDAY SHOPPING



The holiday season is fast approaching and now is a great time to buy unique gifts for family and friends or beautiful accessories for your home or office. We invite you to browse AFJHAR's on-line shop and check out the beautiful handiwork of our Gashora artisans.

TO SHOP JHA
HAND-WOVEN BASKETS
[CLICK HERE!](#)

JHA's workforce development programs create meaningful jobs for the community. The JHA basket weaving and arts programs provide a "living wage" to the participants. Our talented weavers are specialists in weaving baskets of the highest quality and their stunning bowls, trivets and containers stand out among others because of the care and time they take into crafting each one.

Each item is a work of art and an original. 100% of the proceeds go back to the women & children in the village to support educational and nutritional programs & other programs offered by JHA.



Twagirimana Jean de Dieu ("Junior") is the resident artist at JHA's Irikibe Art Gallery in rural Gashora, Rwanda. The Art Gallery is designed to create self-sustaining jobs for the artists, offer trauma therapy for our youth, and provide a revenue stream to support the programs of Journey House Actions. By purchasing a basket or painting you help transform the lives of the weavers, artists, and the most vulnerable children of Gashora by providing these artisans with self-sustaining & fulfilling work.

To stay up to date on all things AFJHAR
please follow us on social media!



THIRD ANNUAL **FOOD BASKET APPEAL** *“Smiles are bigger, when stomachs are full ”*



Access to nutritious food is critical for the cognitive development and wellbeing of our children. Without food children can’t learn and develop. In December, AFJHAR will be holding our Third Annual Food Basket Appeal in support of the work of Journey House Actions (JHA) in feeding the poorest children and families in rural Gashora, Rwanda. We plan to send out appeal letters in early December.

Thanks to our generous donors, AFJHAR raised over \$210,000 during our first two Food Basket Appeals. Our goal this year is to raise at least \$150,000 to fund JHA’s 2024 Food Basket needs.

Proceeds from the Food Basket Appeal help JHA supply two nutritious meals each day to the 300 children who attend JHA’s Journey of Success Early



Childhood Development Center. In addition, meals are served to several hundred non-students each afternoon. For most of these children, it is their only meal of the day.

JHA recently built its second Early Childhood Development Center, which will serve another 300 children in 2024. This new school will significantly increase the number of meals served each day.

If you would like to support or learn more about JHA’s 2024 Food Basket needs and the life-changing impact of your gift, please visit the Food Basket Appeal Page on our website

[HERE](#)

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