

May 2022 Newsletter



MARY'S REFUGE

cloaked in love



A Call to Mission



Ever since I can remember, I have loved missionaries. I remember learning about Mother Teresa's life in Calcutta and thinking I wanted to serve people like that; I want to live the Gospel in a radical way. In 2016, I traveled to Uganda for the first time. I was blessed to encounter the joyful faith of a people living in extreme poverty. The experience forever changed me. In my heart, I felt that I had found my Calcutta. In November 2019 I was given the opportunity to work with an organization that supported teenage mothers and their babies living in Uganda. I worked to raise funds and spread the message of God's call on our hearts - to stand with these outcast women. After a year of service, I felt God calling me to more of a leadership role in this mission. A dream had started to take root in my heart. The possibility of starting a new ministry in Uganda was slowly working its way into reality. The first time I brought it up to my husband, it seemed like it was ten years down the road. God has a funny way of bringing His will into existence at His designated time. For Mary's Refuge the time was December 2021 - much sooner than 10 years down the road.

After much discussion with my incredible friends in Uganda and in the U.S, I decided to go to Uganda to develop and set in motion Mary's Refuge. My desire was to find an effective way to serve the teenage mothers and their babies. This meant providing services for them that would truly help them to succeed in life and to be healed in their relationship with God - to know their true identities in Christ. Once in Uganda, there were many meetings with Catholic priests and ministry staff to determine the best way to bring this type of transformation into the girls' life. We decided to start in the parish of Mutukula, a border town fixed between Uganda and Tanzania. On the Ugandan side of the border, there are hills in which many rural villages reside. In these villages there are five different outstations of Mutukula Parish. It is in those villages that we traveled and registered mothers 19 and under to be part of this new ministry. By the end of the trip we had created five Mary's Refuge communities of mothers, each belonging to a parish outstation. By January 2022, ministry staff started to visit each community once a week to start their healing transformation.

Today we have a total of 83 young mothers in our program, and it's continuing to grow. Mary's Refuge provides a two year syllabus in which the girls re-evaluate their relationship with God and gain the confidence to have dreams for themselves. Alongside these group sessions, we hope to support them in acquiring skills to support themselves and their babies. This includes providing them with workshops taught by masters in different areas such as basket weaving, hair styling, and tailoring. For those who wish to go back to school we also raise the funds for these girls to finish their elementary, middle and high school equivalents. On a case by case basis we help these girls find their potential. Whether through a trade or higher education, we are dedicated to helping them realize their dreams.

I am incredibly blessed to be able to invite you into this ministry. You may ask yourself, "What can I do? Or how can I even make much of a difference?" I remember being in that position in the beginning. I felt helpless and like God had cast this impossible call on my heart. It was a call that I wanted, but I felt incapable of answering. I have since learned that it really is in the small acts that one makes the biggest impact. For me it was talking to my friends and using what little connections I had in the community to reach out and spread the word. It can be as simple as that, just spreading the word about the girls that we support. Another way to support is financially. It is always an awkward thing to ask for money, but I have come to realize it is really God asking. We are, after all, His hands and feet - why not His voice? Every little bit helps, but we also need long term financial partners to keep us moving forward as we grow. Right now \$1 equals 3,577 Ugandan Shillings. To give you an idea of how far a dollar goes, you can buy a box of clean bottled water for 5,000 UGX, or \$1.40. In my opinion, that makes a difference.

I urge you to pray about what call God has placed on your heart. You never know, you may just end up in Uganda someday offering a bottle of water to a teenage mother.....or helping her receive a graduate degree to become a doctor or lawyer. The possibilities are endless. I hope you will consider joining us in this special ministry and see the dreams become reality. God bless you, we are praying for you.

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Please Pray...

- For the young women we serve, that they will come fully into relationships with Jesus Christ and know their true dignities in Him
- For our ministry staff, that we may also know and live out of our true identities in Christ, for we cannot give what we do not have
- For unity between the staff in Uganda and in the US, especially that technological difficulties may not prove an obstacle to communication
- For the financial support needed to continue and further this ministry

Emily Rusch, Founder of Mary's Refuge



Since introducing Mary's Refuge in December of 2021, 83 young women have been benefitting from the program



Annette

After giving birth this past January, Annette became very sick and was separated from her daughter. Mary's Refuge was blessed to assist her with her healthcare needs and aid in reuniting her with her child.



Lilian

15 years old
Mother to Gift, 3 months
Lilian dreams to return to Primary 6 next term and someday become a nurse!



Following Dreams

"An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream..."
Matthew 1:20

Saint Joseph is the patron of Mary's Refuge. In a dream, he was instructed to receive Mary, a teenage mother, and her child. Perhaps the Lord is not leading us through our literal dreams while we are sleeping, but He is communicating the dreams of our heart in some form. He placed a dream in Emily's heart to support the teenage mothers in Uganda—and what a blessing that she has responded to this call, inviting others along to find their own dreams fulfilled. The teenage mothers are discovering hope—permission to dream again. Members of the Mary's Refuge team are able to find a place for their unique gifts.

How about you? What are your dreams? What does God intend for your life? Are you ready to follow? Where might He take you?

Visit cloakedinlove.org for more stories and the option to sponsor women like Annette and Lilian.

Supporting Dreams

A big **THANK YOU** to the teens at St. Agnes Catholic Church in Fowlerville, MI! They sponsored an Easter Monday celebration—and what joy they brought to the young mothers!! Our 5 communities joined together for Mass, a meal, dancing, plays, and a netball tournament!



Consider Making a Financial Gift

1

Online with Credit Card

One-time, annual, or monthly support
cloakedinlove.org/donate

2

Mail a Check (made payable to *Mary's Refuge*)

PO Box 544
South Lyon, MI 48178

*Mary's Refuge is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.
All donations are tax-deductible.*

Thank
you!

