



partners for care

Summer 2022

Partnering for hope and health in East Africa



*Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin.
Zechariah 4:10*

From Our Founder
Connie Cheren

When we started Partners for Care 15 years ago, we never imagined it would be what it is today. I like to tell people we started with nothing – not even a spoon! We had no programs, no centers, no vehicles, no music equipment – nothing. But, with the help of our donors and God's blessings PFC has grown not just in material assets, but in staff and programs as well. In this newsletter we look back as we move forward. Enjoy the stories of how PFC has evolved over the years and see our plans for the future. Smile at early photos where we all look younger!

Connie

A Message from Sammy Wanjau

Executive Director PFC Kenya

When I joined Partners for Care in 2007, I was a young musician looking to make my mark in the world through music. I wanted to help others but I didn't really know what that looked like. So when Connie asked if I would like to work for PFC, I said yes. I had no

idea that I would become part of an organization that is actively reaching and changing the lives of my fellow countrymen in so many ways, including through music. Partners for Care has come such a long way from where we were back in 2007, and I am so proud of the work our team has accomplished. Over the last 15 years, thousands of Kenya men, women, and children have received the gift of mobility, access to safe water, protection from malaria, education and literacy, computer skills, sewing skills, and best of all, the good news of the gospel. I am so grateful to all our donors who believe in this work and faithfully support our team on the ground through financial gifts and prayer. As I look back and see how far we've come, I am more excited than ever to move forward, changing more lives and raising up my beloved Kenya!

Sammy



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PFC Staff



Some of the current staff

Partners for Care staff has grown from one part-time staff person to 35 staff. In 2007 with the post-election violence, I was joined on a PEACE BUS tour of the Internally Displaced People's Camps by Sammy Wanjau. It was clear Sammy wanted to help Kenyans in any way he could. Sammy became a full-time employee of Partners for Care bringing with him four musicians. Along with Sammy, these four young men used their talents to share the message of HIV/AIDS prevention reaching 1 million people throughout Kenya.

As Partners for Care added programs, we added staff to manage each program. First, Kathi's House with Pastor John and his wife Mary. Then we started programs in Marsabit, Kenya supporting our beloved Pastor Hirbo. Next we started work on the coast in Kilifi where Peter Chea manages a staff of four.

Soon we were distributing bed nets and water backpacks and opening computer schools, sewing schools, and literacy programs. We opened a medical clinic and hired a clinical

officer and clinic staff to manage the center. As we began to receive mobility carts, adaptive equipment, and other medical equipment, we needed a staff person to manage the distribution and tracking of all these devices, so we hired a manager of mobility carts and devices.

After purchasing the Partners for Care house in Nairobi we needed staff to manage the security and upkeep of the property so we added more staff. Now there are 35 staff supported by Partners for Care. In the beginning our staff were young and mostly single, but now many are married with families of their own to support.

We have invested in our staff over the years putting 13 through college. Our PFC House Manager took a course in hospitality. Others took courses in computers and IT. Our accountant received a degree in accounting. Currently, we have two staff in college and one staff person beginning a course to be certified as a music technician. We have also helped 23 staff obtain their drivers licenses.

As we move forward we hope to help more of our staff attend college or take courses that help them in their work. As you read the articles in this newsletter you will see what a small but passionate staff can do to change a life and impact a nation.



Three of the original staff



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Assets

When I look at the assets of Partners for Care, I am reminded how we started with nothing. Our first asset was a keyboard that I carried on the plane to Kenya. Now we have a fully equipped studio with many speakers, guitars, two keyboards, and other pieces of musical equipment, including a steel drum from Musik Haus music store in Gaylord, Michigan, which is owned by our long-term supporters Gary and Teresa Kersting.



PFC house

For a long time we didn't have any vehicles. Pastor John cared for a household of children without a vehicle to transport them to school and medical appointments. Now he has a van as does Kano Daro in Marsabit and Peter Chvala in Kilifi.

Our first "office" was a two-bedroom rental apartment. Now we have a 5-bedroom home in Nairobi that serves as the PFC office and is home to several of our staff. We also have a storeroom large enough to store the contents of a 40-foot container of mobility carts before they are distributed. We have Kathi's House and our latest acquisition – the Center of Hope in Marsabit.

We have all of these assets because of our donors. The assets help our staff reach and serve the most marginalized in Kenya. We know we are blessed and appreciate everything we have received.

As we move forward, we are using our assets not only to serve but to develop sustainability programs to help us serve even more people.



Sammy with first keyboard

Containers

Our first container was one we "rescued." An NGO (nonprofit government organization) wasn't able to clear the container through customs so it was "stuck" in port on the coast of Kenya. We didn't understand the process of clearing a container, but Sammy and I naively went to the coast to clear it. After weeks and two trips to the coast and learning about taxes, storage fees, a bill of lading, and a certificate of conformity, we were finally able to clear the container.



Now we have received 40 containers bringing over \$3 million dollars worth of in-kind contributions to Kenya – all to help change the lives of those most in need. Some of the items we have received include:

- **4,502 mobility carts**
- **375 computers**
- **344 sewing machines**
- **1,050 coolers (used to help mobility cart recipients establish small businesses)**
- **68,230 water backpacks**
- **247 walkers**
- **69 wheelchairs**

As we move forward, we plan to bring in equipment in containers to set up in-country production of mobility carts. We hope to bring in more sewing machines and computers to establish additional sewing and computer schools.



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Computer Schools

We carried our original computers to Kenya in our suitcases! The first PFC computer school was established in January 2010 in Nairobi County in an area surrounded by three informal settlements (slums) Juakali slum, Ngomongo slum, and Githogoro slum, which have a combined population of 50,000 residents. Since its inception, the school has graduated 1,402 and currently has 47 students enrolled. Most students who join the school are youth who have just graduated from high school and use the skills acquired to seek employment.

From these original computers and computer school, Partners for Care now has 275 desktop computers and 100 laptops and have opened 25 computer schools.

Moving forward we want to double the number of computer schools. A big goal.....but possible!



First computer school



Marsabit computer school

Sewing Schools

In December 2017, Partners for Care opened its first sewing school in Kahawa Sukari, Kiambu County. It is an area surrounded by two informal settlements (slums) - Githurai slum and Mwhoko slum, which have a combined population of 60,000 residents. Since its inception, the school has graduated 420 students and currently has 15 students enrolled. Most students who join the school are women who use the skills acquired to seek employment and create a small business after graduation.



Sammy, Bridgette Boylan and Connie cutting the ribbon on the first school

Now thanks to Mobility Worldwide – Missouri, Columbia, PFC has 344 sewing machines and 28 sewing schools. These sewing schools give men and women the skills they need to open businesses to support themselves and their families.

Moving forward we want to open 24 more sewing schools helping thousand more to learn to sew because families are fed by needle and thread.



Name of the first sewing school



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Water Backpacks



Walking for water

Our first water backpacks were shipped via UPS to Kenya. We flew them to Marsabit and distributed them to the tribal women in this area. These women walked over six hours every day to source for water.

We have now received 68,230 water backpacks. Our plan is to distribute them to every school as one pack gives 30 children access to safe water. To date, we have distributed water backpacks to 1,437 schools impacting 689,760 children.

Moving forward we hope to produce the water packs in-country. Not only can PFC distribute the packs in Kenya, but we can distribute them to other African nations that need a safe way to source and dispense water.



First water pack distributed



School child accessing safe water

Bed Nets

Partners for Care previously obtained bed nets from our partner HEART. Now, we are blessed by a donor who supports both the purchase and production of bed nets. To date, we have distributed 20,966 bed nets. We distribute bed nets to the most at risk for malaria – children under five, pregnant women, the elderly, and the disabled. Every person who receives a mobility cart also receives a bed net. PFC is now sewing bed nets in our own sewing schools.



Kilifi team distributing nets

PFC staff don't just distribute bed nets, they also teach moms how to properly use the net to cover their children to prevent malaria. Recently our Kilifi team distributed bed nets to an island where there is a high rate of malaria and no bed nets. The moms and children were so happy to have a bed net to protect them from malaria, which is one of the world's leading causes of death among children under five.



Happy mom and children receiving a bed net

Moving forward we want to continue to sew nets in our sewing schools and teach hundreds of women how to make and use bed nets.



Pamela Muhatia sewing bed nets in PFC sewing school



bed nets at a school



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Marsabit



The road to Marsabit



Marsabit staff

When Partners for Care started working in Marsabit, there wasn't a paved road to reach Marsabit. The trip to Marsabit meant an 18 -hour drive from Nairobi, including a 10-hour drive through the desert. Over time, a paved road was finally built shortening the trip to 10 hours.

In the beginning, we did not have a computer school in Marsabit. Pastor Hirbo rented a room and painted a sign over the door declaring that there would soon be a computer school in Marsabit. I never underestimated Pastor Hirbo's faith and soon we opened a computer school in Marsabit. To date, 1100 students have graduated from this computer school.



A sign painted with hope and anticipation

Pastor Hirbo would bring the little children who needed rescuing to his small humble, rented home where he lived with his wife and children (his own children and those he adopted). Now we have a beautiful Center of Hope where the rescued children are brought and lovingly cared for by Zainabu Haile, Pastor Hirbo's wife.

Moving forward we plan to continue to rescue children, distribute bed nets and mobility carts to the most vulnerable in Marsabit County, and to educate many more students in our computer school.



The Center of Hope

Kilifi



Original Kilifi Center

What started as a small ministry in Kilifi on the coast of Kenya has grown to a ministry that is widely known by most people in this area. Our staff in Kilifi have helped 935 people learn to read and write in one of their two literacy schools (one meets under a tree). 827 students have graduated from their computer school – many obtaining jobs in the local hotels or grocery shops.

This small PFC team has distributed 505 mobility carts, 4,087 bed nets and 1,529 water backpacks. And, they have treated 18,234 for debilitating jiggers.

Moving forward we hope to purchase a space for PFC in Kilifi so they have a permanent site. Currently, the space they use is rented.



The Kilifi PFC staff



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Kathi's House

I met Pastor John even before we started Partners for Care. He told me of his dream to help vulnerable children. When we identified five vulnerable children at a nearby children's home, Pastor John and his wife Mary agreed to help them.



Pastor John and Mary and the original five children

David Gruber raised the funds to create Kathi's House, which is named for his late wife who died before she fulfilled her dream of serving in Africa. In the 12 years since Kathi's House opened, Pastor John and Mary have nurtured 50 children. The original rescued children are now grown now and in college.

Moving forward, Pastor John and Mary have begun managing Mary's Market, a small grocery mart that helps bring in funds to support Kathi's House. Mary's Market is located in the front of Kathi's House and serves the local community with needed supplies. It is one of PFC's sustainability programs.



Mary's Market



Pastor John and Mary

Music Program

Partners for Care's music program has changed over the last 15 years. The original music program involved concerts held all over Kenya where the staff shared the gospel and the message of HIV/AIDS prevention. The program was called "what if?" (as in what if there was no more HIV/AIDS?). The music team reached 1 million people with the message of an HIV/AIDS-free world.



what if?

Now the music team manages a recording studio, performs in the US, and for our Virtual Elephant Gala every year. They also rent some of the music equipment through our Sound Hire sustainable business helping to support the work of PFC.

Moving forward the music team hopes to perform more in the US helping PFC tell the story of the work in Kenya.



PFC music studio



Sound Hire

Mobility Carts



Partners for Care received the first mobility carts in the container we rescued. We didn't know what was in those large boxes labeled PETS (for personal energy transport). But, when the staff opened the boxes and saw the parts of mobility carts they didn't hesitate to assemble them and distribute all 15 carts. Pastor Hirbo carried two carts all the way to Marsabit on a public bus and then rented a vehicle to take one of the carts through the desert to a young man named Boya. This young man had crawled in the desert sand to church for years. Now he could ride his cart to church.



Pastor Hirbo



Happy with his cart

Since those original carts, PFC has received 4,502 carts!

Moving forward, PFC plans to make the mobility carts in-country. This will help us fulfill Mel West's vision of mobility for everyone in Kenya.

Vision Teams



Serving with the PFC staff



The best way to explain the way Partners for Care has changed how we bring teams to Kenya is what we now call teams. We used to call teams mission trips and now we call them vision trips.

We learned over the years that it is better for us to bring teams for the purpose of not doing what our staff can do themselves, but rather to support our team, and to serve the people of Kenya under the leadership of our Kenyan team. The PFC staff are happy to show teams what they do everyday and to have the teams work alongside them.

We hope people come to Kenya to "catch" the vision of PFC to serve the most vulnerable and change their lives. Team members can support PFC staff in many ways – prayer, financial support, and sharing with others the work of PFC.



A vision team

Moving forward we plan to bring 4-6 teams a year now that Kenya is open.