

**Rich Tarro, Kenya – December 2020**

**Welding education and hope for a better future**

As you know, much of my ministry work during COVID has focused on [food security](#). While the primary objective of my [HOPE ministry project](#) is to assist orphans and vulnerable children with their education, children need to be able to eat in order to survive. HOPE continues to provide support to families who are struggling to put food on the table during this pandemic. I am so grateful to all who have contributed and continue to contribute to these efforts. The unfortunate reality is that many families continue to struggle to eat.

Beyond this emergency, real change will only come about when people have jobs and can earn money. Our goal is to empower children through education — to give them the knowledge and skills they need to have a career or start a small business and become financially self-sufficient. Education will allow these children to break the cycle of poverty.

Jackson is 20 years old and the third of seven children. He never knew his father and was raised by his single mother. When Jackson was 13, his mother became ill and passed away, leaving the children with no one to care for them. Jackson's eldest sister tried to take care of the family. However, because there was no money, Jackson had to stop going to school.



*Jackson welding (where?? His school or the unpaid job??)*

After struggling for a year, the elder sister decided to take Jackson and some of his other siblings to a children's home. There Jackson was able to resume his school work. However, after four years, his sister tried once again to reunite the family. While this worked well for a time, she was again unable to earn enough money to send her siblings to school. Jackson and his siblings missed school for two more years. Eventually they were forced to split up again.

The elder sister moved up country, and the younger siblings were taken to another children's home. At this point, Zakayo, Jackson's older brother; Peter, Jackson's younger brother; and Jackson began to live on their own. Through the grace of God, they came to the attention of the Pontifical Missionary Societies of the Mombasa archdiocese, which paid for them to finish primary school.



The two years while the boys completed primary school was very tough going. They struggled to buy food and pay for other essentials.

Fortunately, one of my fellow Maryknoll lay missionaries was able to help them with housing expenses through her ministry. However, even though the boys had now finished primary school, with only a basic education they had very few prospects for jobs and even fewer for ones that would pay a living wage.

This is the point where I got to know Zakayo, Jackson and Peter. When I first met Jackson, he was not very communicative and didn't speak English (which is required in Kenyan schools as all classes are taught in English) very well. When we asked him what he wanted to do, he expressed an interest in learning welding. We accepted him into the HOPE Project and enrolled him at a local technical school that has a welding and fabrication program. HOPE paid for his school fees, uniforms, work boots and all other required school supplies.



Although Jackson has yet to complete his welding certificate (classes were and still are interrupted by COVID), it has been an absolute joy to watch his progress. He not only applied himself completely to his school work and learning his craft, but he has also developed so much as a young man. He is much more communicative, self-confident and responsible. His English has improved substantially.

When the school closed due to COVID, he worked several days a week without pay for a local welder for several months. Not only did he get a lot of hands-on experience, he also did a great job in everything he was asked to do. He and his brothers grow fruits and vegetables for food, and he now has a paid job at the school working the security gate. The hope is that the school will reopen in January, as planned, so that Jackson can complete his certificate and get a job as a welder.

Jackson is an example of the difference HOPE can make in the life of a child. He has already made so much progress in improving his life and putting himself on the path to financial self-sufficiency. Through our academic and personal development programs, we strive to give Jackson and others the opportunity to overcome poverty and create a better life for themselves and their families.

Your financial support of HOPE can help change the lives of young people like Jackson, empowering them to become the person they want to become.

Christmas blessings????

Rich Tarro

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*Please consider supporting HOPE Project and our continuing distribution of urgently needed emergency food assistance during this pandemic. Read more at [mklm.org/tag/rich-tarro/](http://mklm.org/tag/rich-tarro/)*

**To donate by MAIL**, please return the bottom portion of this letter with your payment in the provided envelope.

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**Thank you very much for your generosity!**

**Your generous donations will support both my ministry with orphans and families who have been affected by HIV/AIDS and the Missioner Sustenance Fund that helps to keep me and my fellow lay missionaries in mission. Thank you!**

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