

December 2011

Greetings Jitegemee Family,

In July 2010, knowing very little about Jitegemee, outside of a general notion of what it was and that it was being led by someone I look up to and respect, I endeavored to help raise funds to build a new education center for kids in a town far far away, with a name that I could barely pronounce. That July, with the help of many of you and some very generous matching donors, we raised over \$60,000 for the new school, putting us more than a quarter of the way toward our ultimate \$200,000 goal. A couple months later, still never having been to visit the actual program, talk with the kids, or meet the staff, I was asked to join the board of the organization. Honored to receive this invitation, I immediately accepted. At that point, the next big item on my life agenda became to make the journey to Machakos to visit the program in person. This past August, almost a year after being asked to join the board, I was able to make the trip.

Before boarding the bus in DC to make it to JFK airport I purchased a small notebook to capture my thoughts as I traveled. The very first line in the notebook, written as I was about to land at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport reads, “7 minutes from landing, still no idea what to expect...”



Jitegemee students and me having fun with the camera.

With that frame of mind, I passed through customs and met up with Farah, a familiar face in uncertain surroundings. She escorted me to a car driven by Captain Amos (Amos, by the way, is the best there is – if you ever make the trip to Kenya, I have his contact information), and we were off to Machakos—marking the beginning of the experience of a lifetime.

Over the next ten days, I would be shuttled between five different cities, experiencing everything from sitting in on community planning meetings for the new education center and meeting the architect Musau Kimeu; to sleeping in a bunk bed underneath a mosquito net at a primary boarding school after an 8-hour cross-

country bus trip. In the course of my travels, I had the opportunity to talk politics and the future of the country; witness firsthand the excitement around the Kenyans for Kenya fundraising campaign; float along Lake Naivasha next to very large hippos; taste traditional Kamba food; and visit the slums where some of our students grew up.

When I made my first journal entry on August 5th, I had no way of knowing the truly profound impact this trip would have on me. However, by the time I left Kenya on August 13th, I was absolutely humbled by the dedication of the Jitegemee staff, and the spirit, intelligence, and gratitude of the Jitegemee students. On my fourth day in Machakos, I spent time with Valentine, Peter, Grace, and Christine, the first two are students in our formal schooling program, and the latter two are students in our vocational training program. As we walked through the city, visiting their apprenticeships, and exchanging stories and questions about life in our respective worlds I came away impressed with the students' recognition and appreciation of the opportunity they were being given. At one point, as we walked past two street kids, one with a glue bottle literally stuffed in his nose, one of the girls whispered to me, "That used to be us."

Our students are excelling in school and in the workplace. They're focused on taking full advantage of the opportunities given them through Jitegemee, and are working even harder at creating additional opportunities for themselves.

A year into my board experience, I get it now, much more clearly than I ever did before. I see the connection between the money raised here and the impact it has on the lives of children a world away. I get the opportunities that \$10 affords, and I feel extremely blessed to be in a position to help make a difference in another's life. As we enter this holiday season, if you haven't taken the opportunity to contribute to the great work that is going on at Jitegemee, I would implore you to consider it. We are still fundraising to meet the goal of our 2012 operating budget. It is only through your generosity that we can continue to literally change lives!

Asante Sana (Many Thanks),

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Clarence Wardell III". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "C" and "W", and the Roman numeral "III" is written in a separate, bold stroke.

Clarence Wardell III

P.S. For more updates throughout the year please visit our website (www.jitegemee.org), follow us on Twitter (@jitegemeeinc), or "like" us on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/JitegemeeInc>)!