

WHERE WE BEGAN

The Olmalaika Home is the result of God giving Kim DeWitt a heart and passion for young girls in Kenya who have no voice. It is also a result of her hard work and altruistic vision. Kim is Director of Global Village Ministries (GVM), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in the U.S. which provides medical and dental service trips to Kenya three times each year. GVM also promotes long term projects in the areas they visit, including building and education programs. The largest of these is The Olmalaika Home, which provides a safe home and education for young girls who have either endured Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and/or child marriage or are at high risk of it.

Kim's parents were missionaries, and she spent twelve of her first fourteen years living in Kenya. She later returned to live there with her own family for six years, returning to the U.S. in 2005. By this time, God had begun stirring her compassion for the young girls of Kenya who needed her help. In 2006, she put a team of Kenyans together and began leading service trips to Kenya, and was soon the team was recruited by Norbert Schwer, then-President of GVM to organize their trips. It was not long after she began working with GVM that Norbert recognized her passion for the plight of the young Maasai girls and offered to support her in working with them. They immediately came across several girls who needed their care and quickly found sponsors for them. The girls attended boarding school and during the holidays Kim and her team found a rescue center to house them. It was not long before they realized that the center was mismanaging the funds they were giving them and were not treating the girls well. They realized that they needed to build their own Home and soon Kim's dream became reality.

A couple in Australia donated \$20,000 to get the building started, and Kim and her team stepped out in faith, praying that the funds needed to complete the Home would come in. And they did. Donors were generous, and they were able to raise the funds and complete the Home in just over a year. The Olmalaika Home opened its doors in July of 2013.

There are currently 35 young girls living at Olmalaika, ranging in age from 5 to 18, and 4 having completed college. Each girl has a sponsor(s) and the majority of the sponsor's cost covers schooling, uniforms, books, trips, transportation, school supplies plus personal clothing/shoes etc. The Home's monthly budget is \$3000 and it covers food, up keep for the home and guesthouse, general supplies, maintenance, and salaries for the 14 staff.

The girls have simple but cheerful bedrooms, usually eight girls to a room. There is also a large common room which is used for eating, playing, studying and doing crafts. The kitchen area is connected to the home as well as the washrooms. The girls are able to help prepare the food, some of which is grown in their own garden, and wash their own clothes and perform other household tasks. They rise early each morning for worship, and love to sing.

Most of the girls are in primary (elementary) school so attend the local school, those in secondary school (high school) attend boarding school several hours away and return to Olmalaika during the holidays. Many of the girls have expressed the desire to become doctors, teachers, nurses and lawyers. The Olmalaika Home is changing lives and giving these girls incredible opportunities.

Some of the girls are orphans, some are victims of FGM and childhood marriage, or have been rescued from that fate. Despite FGM being illegal in Kenya, it is still a real and frightening occurrence for many young Maasai girls. As Kim says, "So many people ask me about The Olmalaika Home and feel the progress with ending FGM is slow and hopeless. Each girl is one girl saved and changed, and some day she will have her own family and each precious daughter of hers will not be at risk of FGM or childhood marriage. Just ONE GIRL SAVED will impact the lives of many others -- it is a ripple effect."

Kim lives at the Olmalaika Home and each GVM service trip team gets to spend time at the home with the girls. They clearly adore her - there is always much laughter and singing. Despite the successes, Kim constantly worries about not only the girls who are living in the Home, but stresses about the ones she has to turn away for lack of space or funds.

The home is dependent on people like you giving generously to make a difference. With that help, Kim's dream of saving these young girls is becoming reality.

