



News Highlights

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Brian Manley recently joined our team as the new Executive Director for Impact Hope.

Being a Refugee Won't Stop Me

By Gad Bakinahe

"Soleil Nyirashema is a Congolese refugee from Rujebeshi in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Her father worked as a cheesemaker, while her mother, despite suffering from war-related trauma, was a farmer. Soleil and her friends were often targeted by rebels, who hatefully referred to them as "bugs" and accused them of being Rwandans.

"When we went to get water, the rebels would beat us and tell us to go back to Rwanda. It scared me deeply, and my mother would faint every time she heard gunfire," Soleil recalls.

Education is essential for a better future, but Soleil's schooling was cut short due to the insecurity in her hometown. "I used to go to school, but students and teachers discriminated against us because they thought we were Rwandans. Eventually, I dropped out and stayed at home. That's what drove us to flee," Soleil explains. The journey from the DRC to Rwanda was anything but easy.

Soleil's family had to escape with only what they could carry, and when they arrived in Goma, they were denied refuge because the priest, under government pressure, was forced to turn away those accused of being Rwandans.

“When we return to my place of origin, I hope to become a well-known tailor.... I always pray for you.... God bless you for all of your help.”

Soleil's Story Continued

Despite the hardships, Soleil's family of seven made it safely to Rwanda. Life in Rwanda was difficult, as they were accustomed to a more abundant lifestyle in the DRC. "I always thank God for being with us from the DRC to Rwanda. It was a new beginning for me, as I was used to drinking milk and eating other delicious meals," Soleil reflects.

After settling in the camp, Soleil attempted to resume her education, but the hour-long walk to school was a daily challenge, especially in harsh weather.

However, Soleil's life took a turn for the better when she learned about Impact Hope. She was chosen to receive sponsorship, an opportunity that brought immense joy to her and her family.

"I thank the Lord for what He has done for me. Being advised to prepare for boarding school felt like a miracle. There were many children in the camp, but I am so grateful to have been chosen," Soleil shares.

The sponsorship from Impact Hope brought renewed hope to Soleil's family. "I can't express how much joy this brought to my family. My parents and siblings are overjoyed. We are grateful to God for everything He has done for us as an Adventist family," Soleil says.

Soleil dreams of becoming a successful businesswoman, and she has already taken steps toward this goal by participating in a summer trades program focused on tailoring.

She has started making Rwandan bags and clothing and is proud of her accomplishments despite the challenges she has faced as a refugee. "I want to be a businesswoman who sells clothing and Made-in-Rwanda bags. When we return to my place of origin, I hope to become a well-known tailor," Soleil says confidently.

"I always pray for you, Impact Hope. God bless you for all of your help," Soleil concludes.



Soleil is in the tailoring program at The Center for Hope, Impact Hope's very own vocational trade school.

Donor Spotlight: Joan Oksenholt A Heart That Writes Hope



At Impact Hope, our mission thrives because of people like Joan Oksenholt. Many of the inspiring stories that you have read in our newsletter have been a result of her passion to lend a voice to the displaced.

For years, Joan has stood as a pillar of strength and compassion—faithfully supporting young refugees through her generous donations and powerful storytelling.

Joan has given voice to the journeys of students who often go unheard. Through her words, their stories have come to life, capturing the resilience, courage, and dreams of youth rising above adversity.

Joan's unwavering commitment has done more than provide resources—it has offered hope.

Her nurturing spirit and motherly care have shown our students that they are not alone, that they are seen, valued, and deeply loved.

Whether through a thoughtfully written narrative or a heartfelt donation, Joan has created ripples of change that continue to inspire.

In recognition of her steadfast love and tireless efforts, Impact Hope presented Joan with a certificate of appreciation—but truthfully, no piece of paper could fully express how grateful we are.

From all of us at Impact Hope USA & Rwanda, and from the students whose lives you've touched—Joan, we love you. Thank you for being a true champion for the next generation.

“This certificate is presented to Joan Oksenholt in profound appreciation of your unwavering support, compassion, and generosity.”

Staff Update: "Celebrating Six Years of Heart & Vision"



We are writing to share an important leadership update. After six years of faithful service, our Executive Director, Liz Thomsen, has transitioned out of her role at Impact Hope to pursue new ventures. Brian Manley took over as the new Executive Director as of June 20.

Liz's time with Impact Hope has been marked by remarkable growth and transformation. Under her leadership, thousands of refugee students in Rwanda have received access to safety, education, and hope for a brighter future.

We are deeply thankful for Liz's dedication and leadership. Stay tuned for a formal introduction to our next Executive Director, Brian Manley.

In her own words:

"Thank you for the incredible journey! It's time for me to say goodbye with deep gratitude and heartfelt appreciation.

As I reflect on my six years with Impact Hope, it has been a true honor to serve alongside each of you—donors, staff, and students.

Together, we've witnessed the incredible power of education and faith in shaping the futures of refugee youth in Rwanda.

Your unwavering support has opened doors of opportunity, sparked hope, and ignited dreams. I am so grateful for the impact we've made together."

Ways **YOU** Can Make an Impact

SPONSOR A STUDENT

\$50 monthly provides a safe education at a Christian boarding school and all living essentials.

DONATE

Whether you make a monthly donation or a one-time donation, 100% of gifts goes directly to the mission.

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