

update

Sex Trafficking Prevention Curriculum nears Completion



In this world of COVID isolation, children have suffered, especially in homes where parents are inadequate, and resources are limited. This creates desperate families who make desperate decisions; children are often used as a sexual commodity – adults trading little lives for food, clothes, or other things deemed essential...a sobering reality! School, our orphan care center and the safe house are protective factors, but the lockdowns have had a huge effect on these havens. Our caring staff visits homes twice a week to monitor needs and help as they can. Our children are the lucky ones.

Throughout this crazy COVID, we are working on our new Sex Trafficking Prevention Initiative, Courage to Care! Sex trafficking is the sexual exploitation of a child for commercial gain – money or any other commodity. In the above scenario,

desperate adults are turning to sex trafficking of their children to survive. But, trafficking goes deeper, involving schools, gangs, law enforcement or political offices, and even churches.

Working with the Safe House Project, we have created a multi-faceted interactive training for pastors, teachers, and other community leaders. Equipping them to train about the science and sickening realities of trafficking. These leaders need strategies for helping both individuals and communities prevent their precious young ones from falling into the hands of those who would rob them of their innocence.

One component of the initiative will be basic self-defense training for children, parents, and even grannies. In collaboration with an, *It Takes Courage!* trained leader at PINK KICK, a local South African self-defense organization, we will teach safety tips and basic moves to use when someone is aggressive. In our last *ITC!* Conference Khumbelo of Pink Kick, worked with our teachers and pastors; these essential skills are already making a difference for our Kerus family at the Orphan Care Center.

Another component will be in collaboration with our partner TWR (formerly Trans World Radio). We will be offering a training program geared for caregivers of children who have been exploited or need rescuing. TWR is providing a series of six audio dramas, *Holding Esther*, and Kerus is writing the training and study guide. We're excited about this component reaching local ministries.

With the training curricula nearing completion, we are excited to move to the next critical stage - production! Over the following months, we must secure the funding to produce all the materials necessary for training across multiple cultural contexts. The goal is to roll out various aspects of the sex trafficking prevention initiative when we return to South Africa later this year. And we hope to make all materials available to every significant ministry in the over 52 nations worldwide where we trained over the last 20 years. We are incredibly grateful for those already on board and look forward to partnering with even more kindred hearts who understand the dangers these vulnerable children face and want to make a difference. The urgency is great . . . our children depend on us!

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTORS

While our family in Soshanguve struggles through the ongoing nightmare of COVID, we continue to be stateside, unable to return to South Africa to help in-person. It's been so hard! All we can do is help from afar, stay in contact with video calls and pray, knowing that God can do what we cannot. We are learning to open our hands, and our staff of 16 amazing individuals continue to amaze us! Their commitment, resilience, and deepening trust in God has been an encouragement. All the work we have done together over the past years is paying off. We are proud mamas!!! God is giving us peace as we continue to trust that he is a good God with good plans.

We are both doing well and working hard to move the Kerus vision ahead with new creativity. It's been good to have the focus time we have so desperately needed to write and create our new *Courage to Care! Sex Trafficking Prevention Initiative*. Hopefully, we will head back to South Africa in a few short months, and when we do, we will be piloting the *Courage To Care! Training*.

We continue to rely on Proverbs 3:5. Trust in the Lord completely, and do not rely on your own opinions. With all your heart, rely on him to guide you, and he will lead you in every decision you make.

Thank you for the continued love, encouragement, and support during this time of challenge. We love you so very much!

Jennie Marcia



>> Jennie, "Raf" and Marcia at Race to Rescue 2019

Life in Soshanguve during COVID



^ Kele wrapping a quilt and her arms around a granny.
(Picture taken prior to COVID)

\$40 feeds a family of 6 for two weeks

You can join our team of generous partners helping us provide food for our Kerus families every two weeks by going to:

kerusglobal.org

As manager of the Kerus Go Amogela Orphan Care Center, Kele has been on the front line of the COVID challenge for our orphans and their grannies in Soshanguve from day one. She has graciously shared her heart with us.

I miss the old normal! I miss the days when it was not an offense to hug. Now we have to elbow greet or just simply wave to show affection. This virus has had severe consequences for our families, and news about the passing of a loved one has become the usual sad way of life. Every day there is a motorcade of cars going to a cemetery to bury loved ones. Funeral parlors are overwhelmed, and people are living in fear. I hear stories of people refusing to go to the hospital, terrified that they will never return home, or not having enough money for transport to even get to a hospital. There is so much false information spread around our vulnerable communities. And while these hardships affect everyone, the poor communities suffer in ways that is indescribable. It is heartbreaking!

After almost a year, uncertainty plagues the community. People have lost their jobs. Grannies are so desperate for food as they care for all their orphaned grandchildren. The reopening of schools keeps being pushed back, and no one really knows what awaits us...we can only hope and continue to pray. This truly is the time where our faith needs to be strong for us to keep going.

Sometimes I wish that this was just a dream, and I will just wake up and realize that this was a horrible nightmare. Again, I want to see the Soshanguve that I know and fell in love with when I started working at the Kerus Orphan Care Centre seven years ago. Just when I thought that we as a generation had reached a point where we were beginning to see people with HIV as "normal" and the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS lessening, now we have to face a new stigma placed on those who contract COVID.

The stigma and the fear are very real. People are embarrassed to wear face masks in public. They hide behind culture to avoid having to adhere to the new regulations surrounding COVID. Families even ask funeral parlors not to wear protective gear when they come to collect the loved ones who have passed because they don't want their neighbors and others to know that the departed died from COVID.

I long for the day when this enemy will no longer rule our lives. I fear how long it may take us to get there. However, with all the challenges that we have faced and continue to face, one thing is for sure... "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

God has provided greatly for us as part of the Kerus family; for our children and grannies, through the love and generosity of our loving American family...YOU! We have not gone hungry, and we are not alone. That is no little thing. Thank you! And although our future is uncertain, our God is not! May God continue to protect us all. Our staff at the center, our orphans and their grannies are praying for you to stay well, protected and to tangibly feel the comfort of God through these challenging times.

With love and gratitude,

Kele

