SPIRIT
Spring 2018

changing
ONE LIFE
AT A TIME

UNBOUND
A human being is both sacred and social, each of us infused by God with an inviolable dignity that’s most profoundly expressed in our relationships with one another.

That tenet of Catholic social teaching is one of the principles upon which Unbound was founded more than 36 years ago. The founders wanted not only to help people lift themselves out of material poverty, but to do it in a way that fosters transformative relationships between people living in different circumstances.

There are a multitude of stories from the Unbound world that testify to the effectiveness of this approach. The story of Dennis, his family and the sponsor who’s helping them change their lives is one of them.

Dennis is a 15-year-old boy living in central Kenya. His family of five lived in a one-room rental property. Alice Wainoga, coordinator of the local Unbound program where Dennis lives, recalled how they struggled.

“Dennis is the second born in a family of three boys,” she said. “The parents did farming on hired lands and supplemented their income with casual jobs not readily available and, therefore, they struggled to meet the family’s daily needs. They struggled to pay house rent, provide food and clothing, and also educate their children.”

The family dreamed of owning their own home with enough land to do modest farming and raise livestock. They also wanted to move closer to Dennis’ school.
“In 2014, Dennis wrote to (his sponsor) informing him that he was transferring since their rental home was far from the school,” Wainoga said. “He was transferring to a nearby school.”

Dennis’ sponsor inquired about the possibility of helping the family relocate. He also offered to pay to have a well dug, but a decline in the local water table made it unfeasible.

Since they couldn’t have the well, the family asked if the money the sponsor was offering could be used instead to build a home. The sponsor agreed and, working through an Unbound fund set up for special family needs, the house was completed in September 2016.

While the support offered went beyond what is expected or typical of Unbound sponsors, it helped the family progress more quickly on their goals toward self-sufficiency. Dennis’ mother, Florence, remembered how elated she was when they spent the first night in their new home.

“No one went to sleep that night,” she said. “We stayed up talking, almost to the morning, and just happy. Even now we can’t believe we are the ones living here, that we are the owners. It’s still kind of like a dream.”

For his part, the sponsor, who asked not to be mentioned by name for this story, was pleased to be able to help the family realize their dream.

“I’d been to poor countries before and I’d seen the condition in which people were living,” he said. “I think it’s a great thing to be able to touch one person’s life, to change one life at a time. You know, Jesus said that whenever you do this for one of the least of my brothers and sisters you do it to me, and these children are very special. They’re Christ for us in our world.”

Today, Dennis attends a high school not far from his family’s new home. He’s a good student who dreams of becoming an airline pilot and seeing the world. He’s also grateful to his sponsor and to Unbound.

“I feel good being sponsored,” he said. “They are supporting my learning. They help me have a good life. I’m really happy. I feel peaceful.”

With their burdens eased by owning their own home and the support Dennis receives through sponsorship, the family is able to concentrate on farming. They raise beans, corn and potatoes on land near their new home. For Florence, who serves as the treasurer for her local Unbound mothers group, it’s the fulfillment of a lifelong dream.

“We are so, so happy,” she said. “Every day we are praying for the [Unbound community], all of them, because they are some of the people who helped make this dream a reality.”
Priests from Unbound are available to serve your parish community by presiding at weekend liturgies — offering parishioners an opportunity to help the poor in a personal way by connecting with a child or elder in another country, and offering relief for the pastor. We do this at no cost to the parish and never take a collection or leave envelopes.

To invite a priest from Unbound to your parish:

CALL: (800) 466-7672
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