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# CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT

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## ANNUAL REPORT

1 APRIL 2016 TO 31 MARCH 2017



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**GIVING KIDS A BRIGHTER FUTURE**

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## 2.0 DESCRIPTION AND MISSION OF CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT

Children of the Light (CotL) continues to be a dynamic organization bringing education to life, for over 150 children yearly. Its educational program is unique, in that it nurtures the children in all areas of learning: reading, spelling, English language, mathematics, social studies, science, environmental issues, arts & crafts, music and drama activities. In addition to academics the children are helped to grow emotionally, socially and physically. Six days a week children enjoy a lively educational experience which is conducted in a safe and non-threatening environment. In addition, each year the children participate in several exciting programs which broadens their scope of the world.

CotL seeks to make education an enjoyable and life changing experience to children who are caught in the quagmire of the current educational system. CotL believes strongly that education is a vital component of enabling children to reach their full potential. We strive to meet this desperate need in Ghana with providing holistic, child-centred and meaningful teaching.

**“The mission of CotL is to impact young lives by providing creative, holistic child-centred education in order to build lives that influence society”**

## 3.0 SPECIAL PROGRAMS

During the year the children participate in a variety of educational and physical programs. These are outlined below:

### **April 2016** –

On 21<sup>st</sup> April, CotL held an Ampe Competition the children were divided into teams: Cocoa, Diamond, Gold and Kente. Cocoa won the tournament.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> April, CotL celebrated ‘Earth Day’ and the focus for us that day was to clean up our community. The children and teachers were provided “all- purpose gloves” and sticks to clean up the rubbish. The children were grouped into teams: Cocoa, Diamond, Gold and Kente. Each team was given two large bags, one to collect empty water sachets and the other to collect rubbish. Each group was assigned an area to cover and we started out from CotL’s venue at 4 pm and returned at 5:30 pm.

Refreshments were provided at the end of the event by Britanica biscuits and drinks were served.

On 30<sup>th</sup> April, we had a tree planting event with ‘Tree Global’. Consent was obtained for the children prior to the event. On the morning of the event children were grouped in their various teams: Gold, Cocoa, Diamond and Kente. The Tree Global staff along with CotL staff and children went to CotL’s site at Pepease.

Tree Global donated two hundred plus tree seedlings to CotL which included: cocoa, pawpaw, coffee, bread-fruit and palm trees. A representative from Tree Global and Kwame Larynoh from Admintelecom Ghana Ltd., talked to the children about the importance of planting trees and the global benefits of tree planting. The Tree Global representative demonstrated how to plant a cocoa seedling, and then with assistance the children planted a number of cocoa and other types of tree seedlings.

After lunch, the children played on the flying fox (zip-line), picked mangoes, and some of the children swam in the near-by stream. On closing a number of children were given tree seedlings to take home for planting.

### **May 2016** –

In May the children were assigned a country and they were tasked to prepare a project about the country they selected e.g. the national flag, map, population, a particular animal or fruit that comes from that country. The younger children selected a country and they worked on their project as a group.

On 28<sup>th</sup> May, the children presented their projects to all of the children and staff, it was a great learning experience for the children.

### **June 2016** –

June marks ‘Reading Month’ at CotL, children are grouped according to their reading level and books are also given out based on their level. A reading log is used to tally the number of pages read throughout the month of June. For Group 1, minutes were logged and Groups 2 & 3, pages were logged; only staff and volunteers were permitted to sign for recordings.

Independent readers were allowed to take books home to read. Throughout the month we had a very good turn-out of volunteers, which included the Australian High Commissioner’s wife, Teresa Barnes, and the NZ representative’s wife to Ghana, Nicky Kingston and their children.

Reading month came to an end on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> of June. There were a total of 130 participants, some children started the month of reading, but were not able to finish, while others came in only at the end. These children had permission to attend the banquet, but did not receive a certificate of participation and a take-home parcel.

## **July 2016** –

On 9<sup>th</sup> July, the banquet for the Reading month celebration was held. The event was held at the CotL Learning Centre at Pepease. The site was cleared and decorated for the celebration. There were invited guests from FOCOS Orthopedic Hospital, Nana Bonsu from Crayon Magazine and other dignitaries from the community attended. The speaker for the afternoon was the editor of ‘Crayon Magazine’ Nana Bonsu, who encouraged the children to take reading seriously.

Prizes were given to the children who read the most pages in each group. Every participant received a parcel: Exercise book (crayon), pencil, dried mango and Top Choco. There were 25 children who received a prize and all committed participants received a certificate of participation and a special take-home parcel.

The children at FOCOS Orthopedic Hospital also participated in the reading program. This was organized by the FOCOS teacher Patricia Ankra – they had their celebration on Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> July.

On 26<sup>th</sup> July, CotL teachers visited Mampong Nkwanta B/A Basic School and collaborated with the school teachers in Kindergarten through to Class 6 for the entire day. The children were very attentive throughout the entire time spent there.

Biscuits were given out at snack time and at the end of the day pencils were given to each student, teachers also received pencils and a small classroom gift.

On 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> July, the children attended a basketball clinic held at the Hephzibah Christian Centre. This basketball program was in collaboration with Akuapem-Ridge Interdenominational Church and Ignite Basketball from Chicago USA. On the final day the children were given a certificate and T-shirt.

## **August 2016** –

On 7<sup>th</sup> August, CotL celebrated its 11<sup>th</sup> year. The children brought the ingredients for cakes to be baked and the staff came together to prepare and bake three cakes for the occasion. The cakes were iced and 11 candles placed on them, everyone received a slice of cake with a soft drink and Happy Anniversary was sung to CotL. Jeanette gave a brief overview of CotL’s history, it was a very happy occasion.

On 24<sup>th</sup> August, CotL gave 35 colourful parcels (soap and wash cloth) to Nurse Naa (a midwife at the Mampong Hospital) for the mothers on the maternity ward at Mampong Hospital. The children were asked to help with these parcels by colouring the prepared envelopes and each bringing in one soap.

On 27<sup>th</sup> August, there was the Recycling Competition (entry fee Ghs1.00); The judges were Elvis Aboluah (Project Director, Trashy Bags), Queen Nzinga, Ruth McDowall (photographer), Kwadjo Opoku (student). Visitors: Stacey Knott (journalist), two Ghana International School students. Speakers for the occasion were Ms. Ruth McDowall and Mr. Elvis Abolush.

Recycling items were grouped into three categories: plastics & clay, cardboard & fabric, tin & wood.

First prize – Ghc 10.00

Second prize - Ghc 5.00

Third prize – Ghc 3.00

### **September 2016** –

On 10<sup>th</sup> September, CotL held an 11K walkathon. It was a great success with a great turn-out – 30 children and 6 adults.

On 17<sup>th</sup> September, along with the reading of the folktale ‘Stone Soup’, CotL prepared a large pot of soup for all to enjoy. The children helped by bringing in a variety of vegetables. A ‘Stone Soup’ activity book was shared and completed.

On 30<sup>th</sup> September, CotL held a Vocabulary test for all children in Group 2. It was only for the children who had completed the purple Vocabulary workbook.

### **October 2016** –

On 29<sup>th</sup> October, the children participated in CotL’s annual Spelling Bee. There were 53 participants in the Spelling Bee and the children were grouped according to their grade in school. The children competed in English and Twi and the winners were given prizes, there was a draw at the end of the competition and gift packs were given to all participants.

Prizes included the following: folders, school supplies, Britanica biscuit, Top Choco, key holders and blankets.

Refreshments were served at the end of the program.

### **November 2016** –

As the regular classes continued this time was also used to make Christmas decoration and rehearse for the Christmas Production.

## **December 2016** –

On 17<sup>th</sup> December, CotL partnered with KAGA Foundation and visited Otareso in the Eastern Region. The pick-up was loaded with gently used shoes and clothing, CotL's colourful parcels x75, drinks, biscuits, sweets, paint and crayon sets, footballs x2. The focus of the visit was to talk against child trafficking and child marriage. With the help of the local school teacher and the community elders, the community were gathered to receive the items and message. The parents were encouraged to send their children to school and cautioned on the signs of child trafficking. We also held a Spelling Bee and had running races with the children. On our journey home, we stopped at a small village and gave the remainder of the colourful parcels and a football to the children in the village. A short message was delivered.

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On 18<sup>th</sup> December, CotL performed for the FOCOS Orthopaedic Hospital children, in the hospital cafeteria. Christmas parcels were given to all the children in the hospital.

On 20<sup>th</sup> December, we had a special visit from the Australian High Commissioner, Mr Andrew Barnes, his wife, Teresa Barnes, staff Justine Townsend and Matilda. They had come to present a cheque to the organization, this donation was raised at the Melbourne Cup Charity Event held at the residence of the Australian High Commissioner. We used this memorable occasion for the children to perform (in costume) the up-coming Christmas performance.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> December, CotL held the final rehearsal of the Christmas performance, a party was held after the rehearsal, approximately 130 children. The children enjoyed milo, fried chicken, popcorn, biscuits and every child was given a Christmas gift which included either a toy car or face cloth.

On 24<sup>th</sup> December, CotL performed in the Kitase Township in Akuapem South in the Eastern Region. The performance was titled, 'The Nine Lessons and Carols'. There was a great response from the community for the event; we had a good turn-out of parents, special guests included the Kitase chief, Nana Kwesi Ankrah II, those passing also stopped to watch the program. Special thanks were given to the sponsors at the event and on social media.

On 30<sup>th</sup> December, CotL held a last day party. Drinks and biscuits were given to the children, plus the work the children had done through the year was given out. Music was played and the children danced.

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## **January 2017** –

No classes for the month of January.

On 6<sup>th</sup> January, CotL once again joined with KAGA's Foundation to reach out to a community. This time we went to Adenya a small village in Akuapem-South in the Eastern Region. We gave 50 colourful parcels containing a wash cloth and soap, party parcels containing drinks, biscuits and sweets and gently used clothing and shoes were also given to the children and adults. A message on the importance of sending their children to school and saying 'NO' to child trafficking and child marriage was given. We also held a Spelling Bee and running races, prizes were given to the winners.

On 27<sup>th</sup> January, CotL held its Annual General Board Meeting.

## **February 2017** –

Classes resumed the second week of February.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> February, CotL held its annual Parent/Teacher's meeting.

## **March 2017** –

On 4<sup>th</sup> March, CotL celebrated Ghana Day, the children prepared projects prior to the event, these projects were put on display for the occasion and the children brought in a variety of Ghanaian dishes to share. Children dressed in traditional Ghanaian clothing and the children sang, the Group 2 children presented a cultural dance.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> March, CotL celebrated 'World Water Day'. Group 2 children made a World Water Day poster prior to the day. 'One Tuesday Down by the River' by Renata was read to the children prior to the event. During the week, all groups talked about the hazards of plastic waste and the importance of not throwing litter. On the actual day the children were divided into their various teams and went out to pick litter and water sachets for recycling. On their return a demonstration on rubbish separation was given and the children enjoyed a meal of kenkey and fish.

## **4.0 ON-GOING ACTIVITIES THROUGH THE YEAR**

The one-to-one literacy program continues on Mondays and Fridays and the regular classes are held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. These classes include Mathematics, English, Science, Social Studies etc., the children are also helped with the homework they receive from school.

On receiving food donations, we provide snacks for the children before the regular classes begin.

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Fortnightly we conduct a Sunday program to the children in a near-by orthopaedic hospital. These children are on long-term admission at the hospital and many of them are from other African countries. The children look forward to this activity.

## 5.0 SUCCESSES

- Through the donations received, we have been able to continue the building of the Learning Centre.
- The on-going programs continue to be enjoyable and very beneficial to the children involved.
- The tremendous turnout at the Christmas performance and the children's performance was commendable.

## 6.0 CHALLENGES

- Our need for committed support for our monthly operational costs and the special programs
- Funding to complete our building project
- Need for an additional Board member
- Need for a paved road to the CotL site
- Need for a bus

## 7.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all our contributors, sponsors and volunteers who have played a tremendous part in the on-going work of CotL.

### **Our 2016/2017 sponsors:**

Australian High Commissioner, Ghana; First Love Foundation, USA; The Support Group of the Swiss Tropical Public Health Institute, Switzerland; Shoprite, Ghana; Lifeline Insurance Services Ltd., Ghana; Rida Cup South, Ghana; Ghana; Steinhovden Skule, Norway; Hosanna Trust, NZ; Eden Assemblies of God Church, NZ; FOCOS Orthopaedic Hospital, Ghana; Mount Roskill, Lynfield and Hillsborough Rotary Club, NZ; Britanica, Ghana; TOP CHOCO, Ghana; Extra Mile West Africa; Type Company Ltd., Ghana; Tree Global, Ghana; Lincoln-Maya Ltd. Ghana; One Million Pencils, USA; Miranda Paul, USA; Trashy Bags, Ghana; Icy Love, Ghana; plus individual contributors.

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## **8.0 FUTURE PLANS**

- 1) To have a fully equipped easily accessible Learning Centre in the Eastern Region of Ghana
- 2) To become an educational training resource provider in Ghana

**Respectfully submitted:**

**Jeanette M. Opoku**

**Director**

**Paulett V. Opoku**

**Secretary**

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