



St Jude's News

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The School of St Jude is a
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Thank you for sharing our newsletter
with your family and friends.



Top Flying High: Judith will accompany Gemma on her visit to Australia in March.

Hey, Jude!

Judith's smile lights up any room, and she can't wait to meet you in March!

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Left Flying High: Judith will accompany Gemma on her visit to Australia in March.



Right Proud Smile: Graduating from St Jude's in 2019 was a dream come true for Judith.

Hey, Jude!

Judith's smile lights up any room, and she can't wait to meet you in March!

Judith stands confidently before two of her trusted peers in the Visitor Centre at The School of St Jude. It's rehearsal day for St Jude's 2020 Australian promotional tour and Judith's been handpicked by 'Mama Gemma' Sisia, St Jude's School Founder, to accompany her on her upcoming trip Down Under.

In front of some of her peers, Judith practices telling her tale of triumph. It's a tale that's well-known to those in the room and will soon be shared with people across Australia. It's the tale of how St Jude's transforms lives.

Judith is preparing for the journey of a lifetime. This month, she is boarding her very first flight, bound for Australia. There she will meet incredible Australian supporters, who have built the school she loves – the place she calls her home – from scratch.

"When Gemma invited me to join her and help to spread the word about our school, I was so excited! I just couldn't believe it was me going there!" Judith enthuses.



"The culture in Tanzania is very different from Australian culture. I will try to learn the differences between here and there, and I will love learning about a new part of the world."

"Of course, I know that we share a great love for St Jude's, so I know I will love everyone I meet!" she says.

Judith started in Standard 1 at St Jude's and is now getting ready for university. She has benefitted from 13 years of 100% free, quality education and she believes it's made the world of difference to her.

"Joining St Jude's changed my life so much. I'm happy and grateful to meet our supporters. I came from a humble family and the sponsors and donors are the ones who enabled me to go to one of the best schools in Tanzania!" she shares.

"It was this golden chance that opened the door and helped me to realise that poverty could not hinder my success forever."

While it's been a challenging year for so many members of our international family, Judith hopes she will bring a story of joy to the people who gifted her with an education.

"I know that so many people in Australia are suffering right now, and it pains my heart. I hope Gemma and I can bring some smiles to their faces, because they really deserve to be happy."

Would you like to hear more about
Judith's remarkable journey?

Be sure to attend a public tour
event in a town near you!

[View the full 2020 tour itinerary here!](#)



Above How Far She's Come: An excited young Judith at the start of her education journey on Uniform Day.

Below Family First: Judith's mother is both nervous and excited for her daughters' big adventure.



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The First Graduates

As 2019 drew to a close, St Jude's celebrated an historic first when 24 former students supported by the Beyond St Jude's program became the first to graduate from university.

It's a milestone that was envisaged when St Jude's was founded in 2002 and became a reality when the first batch of students completed their secondary school education in 2015.

Here, four Tertiary scholars give insight into the significance of the day.



Left All Smiles: Edwina reveling in her success.

It's a sea of a thousand smiles outside the Mlimani City Conference Centre close to the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania's largest city. The Centre is brimming with graduates, with every seat inside occupied. Relatives and friends sit outside in makeshift pavilions, with televisions at the front showing what is happening inside.

"My dream is coming true," says former St Jude's student Edwina, as she approaches the Centre. Edwina became the first person in her family to graduate from university, when she recently completed her Bachelor of Science with Education degree.



Right Next Step: Seraphina is looking forward to the next phase of her life.

In fact, almost all of the 24 undergraduates from St Jude's are the first in their family to have received a university education. It's another significant achievement, not only for St Jude's, but families across Arusha.

"If I wasn't accepted into St Jude's, I couldn't have reached this far," Edwina says. "I definitely wouldn't have been able to afford to continue to study."

Standing next to Edwina is Seraphina, who graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, Economics, Business and Natural Resources. She made the most of her time at university, being peer-elected as Senior Secretary of her University Hall in her second year.



Left Posing for the Camera: Omary, feeling ecstatic after the graduation ceremony.

“If I wasn’t at St Jude’s I would have been in a government school,” Seraphina says. “There’s a big difference in the level of education you get, so the possibility of attending a top university like this one would be very low.”

“When you have an education, you have a chance at making your own life. You get choices. Graduating today makes me feel very happy,” she smiles. “I can’t explain it – it feels like a dream!”

They are joined by two more excited St Jude’s alumni, Omary and Baba. All four feel special in their black gowns and mortarboards.

“University was a wonderful experience and I had an amazing time,” says Omary, who graduated with the same degree as Seraphina. “My thanks go to The School of St Jude and my sponsors, who made sure I got this opportunity.”

Baba, who graduated from a Bachelor of Science with Education, agrees.

“Being a university graduate makes me feel proud and happy,” he says. “I’m so excited!”



Right A Happy Man: Baba’s family is proud to have a university graduate in the family.

Now that these 24 graduates have completed their degrees, they will take the next step in their lives and start their careers, all the while giving back to their communities.

The mission of St Jude’s is to break the cycle of poverty by providing a 100% free, quality education to the poorest and brightest students from three regions of Tanzania. Today is a tangible example of 18 years of hard work coming to fruition.

Help St Jude’s continue to make history by breaking the cycle of poverty through education.

Sponsor a Beyond St Jude’s tertiary scholarship today!





Above Dancing in the Streets: Uniform Day is quite the festival at St Jude's.

Below Tie-riffic: Students take pride in making sure their uniform, often the first item of new clothing they've ever owned, fits perfectly.



A New Wave

It's a highlight on the St Jude's calendar. The day the soon to be Standard 1 and 2 students arrive at the school to have their new uniforms fitted.

It's eight o'clock in the morning and the air smells fresh from a night of rain. Outside the entrance of St Jude's are dozens of eager families who've turned up hours early, waiting for the start of Uniform Day.

Some of the children, who will be studying in Standard 1 and 2 this year, have formed a conga line. Others cling to the hem of their mother's dress. Newfound friendships that will last for years are already being made.

Over 1,000 hopeful applicants attended the selection day in July 2019 and today's group of new students are the result of a rigorous process that helps ensure the limited places available go to those most in need and with the attitude and aptitude to make the most of this life-changing opportunity.

At nine o'clock the day commences. First stop, school photos. One girl named Fauzia decides to strike a pose. With one hand on her waist, the other raised in the air, she grins audaciously.

"That's my girl!" calls Vivian, one of the staff members helping out, "We need girls with confidence!"

After photos, it's time for the uniforms to be fitted.

While adults tend to walk from place to place, children often run. Today is a day of running.

The students rush towards the main school building and up the stairs, plopping down on long wooden benches. One by one their names are called out and they have their uniform fitted. For many, this uniform is the first item of new clothing they've ever owned.

Arriving a little preoccupied is School Founder, Gemma Sisia. She's had a sleepless night, with one of her pet dogs giving birth to five puppies in the early hours.

As she walks past the smiling new students, she suddenly stops, recognising a girl with short hair and a toothy smile.

"Lightness!" she says excitedly.

As part of the application process, St Jude's staff members visit the home of future students. It was Gemma who completed Lightness' poverty check. While looking through a family photo album, Gemma noticed that Lightness was squinting at all the photos. Lightness needed glasses but the family couldn't afford to buy a pair. Yet, despite being visually impaired, Lightness was among the top two in her government school for academics. When Lightness starts at St Jude's she'll receive an annual health check by an international team of medical professionals and will soon have the glasses she needs to see properly.

Sitting opposite Lightness, on a separate bench, is Fauzia, quietly waiting her turn. Out of the door strides Vivian. She crouches down in front of Fauzia, taking her hand.

"Fauzia – come with me!"

Vivian and Fauzia walk inside the room. Tables have been set that are creaking under the weight of newly stitched sky and navy-blue uniforms.

Fauzia begins trying on different dresses, finding her size.

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" asks Vivian, watching on.

"A teacher," says Fauzia.

"What subjects will you teach?"

"All the subjects."

"That's my girl!" laughs Vivian.

Once all the students have been fitted, a blue wave of students sprint toward their families to show off their new uniforms. A father picks up his son, placing him on his shoulders, bouncing up and down. A mother smothers her daughter with kisses. A grandmother buries her face in her hands, the moment too much. All the while a group of St Jude's students have congregated, each of them armed with a drum and encouraging the children to dance.

Fauzia looks around and spots her teenage brother. The boy drops to one knee, welcoming his little sister into his arms

"This feels great," her brother, Yassin says, looking down at his sister in her new uniform. "I'm lost for words, I'm just so happy!"

Support new
students, like Fauzia
and Lightness, by
sponsoring an
academic
scholarship
today.



Above Seeing a Bright Future: Lightness, a future student, will be fitted for glasses when she starts school.

Below Happy Hugs: Parents are overwhelmed with emotion when they see their child after the uniform fitting.





Knowing You to Know Me

Beyond St Jude's Community Service Year intern Rickson, talks about the importance of family, education and learning from others

Rickson has always enjoyed putting himself in other people's shoes.

When he was a little boy, he and his brother Reuben would escape to a room in their house which housed their father's tools and, mimicking their Dad, they'd pretend to fix household objects.

Now, the 21-year-old gets to fulfil his passion for learning about others as an intern with the St Jude's Visitor Team as part of his Community Service Year. Every day he meets different people from different parts of the world who visit St Jude's.

"I love to know what's in people's heads. Hearing other peoples' experiences helps me to understand more than what I have seen or done myself," he says.

For 12 years, Rickson attended St Jude's and graduated in May 2019.



Above Watching On: Rickson takes his tour group through the primary campus. He likes to learn from others by hearing their story.



Above Role Model: A young Rickson and his brother, Reuben, were inspired by their mother, Neema, to achieve their dreams.

Below Support Crew: Rickson invited Reuben and Bibi (grandmother) to witness his graduation.



When Rickson first started school, his mother, Neema, put together a 'wish box'. Every morning before school, she would ask Rickson and Reuben to write down a wish they had for the day.

"I would always put down that I wanted to be top of my class in academics," says Rickson.

After the family had finished dinner and watched the news, Neema would sit down with her sons and read out their wishes.

"Give me some examples of how you achieved your wish," she would say. His mother always wanted to know how they were planning to achieve their dreams.

When Rickson began at St Jude's, he recalls winning the Citizen Award for being a good class member. When his mother found out, she asked him, "What will you do next?" She did the same when he scooped the maths, science awards and even a music award.

When Rickson was finishing Standard 7, the end of primary school, his mother fell ill. He spent many hours conversing with her, trying to keep her spirits up. When he was 14, one of their morning conversations ended up being their last as his mother passed away that night. Overcome with disbelief and grief, it was Rickson's Bibi (grandmother), Anifiambazi, who got him through that traumatic time.

"My grandma became the person I could trust over anyone," he says, adding that his grandmother only recently passed away unexpectedly.

"Every day with my grandmother was a lesson," says Rickson. "I wasn't sad on the day of her funeral, I was thankful for everything I had learnt."

Rickson credits his resilience, determination and aspirational outlook on the lessons he learnt from his mother and grandmother. He also knows that, were it not for his place at St Jude's, he would never have been able to dream of reaching the goals he now sets for himself.

"I'm looking forward to going to university and meeting even more new people. In my future I'd like to travel. I want to do my mum, brother and grandmother proud."

If you'd like to know more about Rickson and his internship, be sure to [listen to the latest episode of our podcast](#), *Inside St Jude's – Conversations with Gemma Sisia*.



Right Thumbs Up: St Jude's offers visitors a tour of the school, one of Rickson's many roles.



Left Purple Carpet: The students proudly tidy their school grounds every morning.



Right Finding the Rhythm: Visitors are welcome to join in a range of classes with the students.

Visitors' Viewpoint

Australians Robyn and Steve Holland visited The School of St Jude in October 2019. With backgrounds in communications and media we invited them, in their own words, to give an insight into their experience.

"We love visitors!" It's impossible to miss the blue words emblazoned on the back of the bright yellow school buses belonging to The School of St Jude in Arusha, Tanzania.

It's also impossible not to feel welcome from the moment you set foot on the Sisia Campus in Moshono. We arrived at St Jude's halfway through our daughter Kate's two-year tenure there in the Marketing team.

Our guide for our four-day visit is Frank, a fresh St Jude's graduate undertaking a year-long internship with the Visitor Team as part of his Community Service Year, before commencing university. His first-hand experience makes him an authentic and invested host.

On day one, Frank gives us a tour of the primary campus, situated below stunning Mount Meru, Tanzania's second highest mountain. It's jacaranda time and in the morning, the students grab brooms and willingly help to sweep up the purple-carpet playground. Australian students would never embrace a task with such enthusiasm.

On entering a grade four music class, we are greeted with a loud, unified chorus of, "we love visitors" and I find myself learning some drumming alongside a couple of eager 11 year-olds. With more than 1,000 visitors per year, we're not a novelty; yet we are received with warmth and grace.

One afternoon, we take the school bus to visit the home of Justina, a Standard 5 student who lives with her older sister and father. We enter a single windowed room inside a basic brick compound, furnished with one double bed, a sofa, a coffee table and assorted possessions in stacked boxes against the wall. I foolishly think this is just one room of a larger house. Not so. This room is the sum total of their existence. There is no power, no running water and a kerosene burner for cooking.

“How has being at St Jude’s changed Justina?” I ask her father, a cobbler.

“Justina is doing so well, she really wants to learn and now she wants to be a teacher,” he responds, his eyes shining with pride.

I am overwhelmed by this home visit. It reiterates the work St Jude’s is doing: taking the poorest children with the brightest minds and educating them free of charge in order to fight poverty and create the leaders of tomorrow.

We leave the family with a customary St Jude’s care package, to assist with some basic living needs including laundry soap, rice, flour, sugar, tea and a solar powered lamp. It is the least we can do. The best we can do though, is to sponsor Justina’s scholarship for her remaining school years.

On our second day, we travel the 25km on the yellow bus out to the secondary school at Usa River, known as Smith Campus. Reminiscent of an American college campus, Smith is seriously impressive. It boasts a large library, computer labs, art room, well-kept sports fields and a farm, which supplies some of the vegetables for the 3,400 meals served daily across both of the campuses.

Importantly, our visitor experience is not confined to within the school gates. Frank takes us to visit a nearby government school where we meet another St Jude’s intern who is volunteer teaching English as part of his Community Service Year. The contrast is confronting: blackboards with peeling paint, 40 plus children in each class, and a library with tattered World Book encyclopedias from the 1970s. It highlighted the real life situation for the majority of Tanzanian students. A Tanzanian adult averages only 5.8 years of schooling.

St Jude’s was named after the patron saint of hopeless causes. Our visitor experience left us believing that this cause could not be any more hopeful.

P.S. On arriving home, we formalised our sponsorship arrangement and are looking forward to hearing about Justina’s progress as she continues her education.

We love visitors! You too can have the experience of a life-time by visiting St Jude’s.
Visit our website for more information.



Above A Heart-warming Visit: Justina, her sister and father warmly welcomed us into their home.

Middle Bigger Than You Think: Smith Campus in all its enormity!



Below Outside the Gates: Seeing the Community Service Year interns in action shows what a great job St Jude’s is doing.





The School of St Jude

Fighting poverty
through education



www.schoolofstjude.org