



Living Room
INTERNATIONAL

upendo / love

2023 - 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW



15

*Fifteen Years
of Compassion*

2009 - 2024



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dear friends,

Fifteen years ago, I said “yes” to a dream that was filling my mind, heart and soul of creating a place of refuge and hope for those in our community who were needlessly suffering. This vision was growing before Living Room officially began, through the care of our neighbors. Living Room’s story is one of years spent walking alongside our patients in the community we serve, believing hard things can be done together. This journey requires great humility, not assuming we know what is needed before we listen, before we sit in homes and understand, even in part, the complexity of the unique lived experience.

We ask questions about the barriers people are facing that prevent them from accessing and affording treatment or following through on taking their medicines or going to the clinic. We listen to the impossible choices that are required each day of so many people in our community.

Since its inception, Living Room has been committed to developing community partnerships and working side-by-side with other Kenyans to build two hospices/hospitals in Western Kenya, a home-based care program, a funeral home, and a guesthouse (64-bed facility to care for children and their families who have traveled far distances to undergo cancer treatment at the nearby government hospital). To date, over 980,000 patients and their families have received care through Living Room. Our approach is one of partnership, as we work alongside community colleagues, the Kenyan health authority, and at global advocacy levels to show what is possible in providing high-quality, patient-centered care to underserved populations.

As we celebrate 15 years of service, we also know there is much important work still to be done. We feel so privileged that you are a part of Living Room’s work of loving with us.

With love and thanks,

Juli Boit
Juli McGowan Boit



Together, we are Living Room

We are a global community working together to provide dignity and quality of life to people in Kenya affected by life-threatening illnesses through holistic care and education.

We offer holistic care to men, women and children suffering from life-threatening illnesses, which includes pain and symptom management, nutrition, physical therapy, and psychological and spiritual support.

Our Model:



VISION

To create a community of compassion that honors life and offers hope.



BELIEF

Every person is created in the image of God. More than treating a disease, we care for a person holistically.



MINISTRY

To extend quality physical, psychological, and spiritual care to patients and their families.



MISSION

To provide dignity and quality of life to people in Kenya affected by life-threatening illnesses through holistic care and education.

LIVINGROOMINTERNATIONAL.ORG





15 Fifteen Years of Compassion

"But when he saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them."
 ~ Matthew 9:36

2009



Felix & Flovia, two HIV+ orphans, give birth to the dream of Living Room.

2010



Guest care begins in an 8-bed 'maternity wing' rented from a local health clinic.

2011



Construction of our 26-bed inpatient hospice on 10 acres of land is completed.

2012



Our reputation and reach grow as we address the needs of those suffering.

2013



Documentary film, *The Space Between*, is shown worldwide spreading awareness of our work.

2014



Risper Kimaiyo, distance runner and ambassador for LRI, wins the Long Beach Marathon.

2015



Through God's grace, LRI purchases 8 acres of land near Eldoret to expand to a second site.

2016



Former guest, Eddah, joins Kimbilio team as a caregiver.

2017



Former guest, Purity, benefits from an education scholarship through our outreach program.

2018



After 17 months of construction, the first phase of Living Room Hospital is completed.

2019



Living Room Hospital is officially opened in Eldoret.

2020



Loving our community through COVID-19.

2021



Kimbilio Hospice constructs and opens a new chapel.

2022



Medical services expand exponentially at Living Room Hospital.

2023



Micah's Guesthouse, housing for children and families undergoing cancer treatment, is opened.

2024



New Resource Center ("Place of Peace") is completed and officially opened at Kimbilio Hospice.



*Do we have room to love,
knowing the outcomes are uncertain?
Will we choose to try, to give our best,
even when it feels like it isn't enough?*

*Are we willing to care,
knowing love is
the cost and the reward?*

EXCERPT FROM **BRAVE LOVE, JULI BOIT**



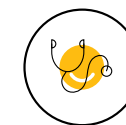
ONE DAY

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO LOVE EVERY DAY?

ONE DAY Stories give you a glimpse into the power of our loving work which happens each day. We invite you to make every second count - to love with us. With your help, we are able to provide a refuge of honor and hope.

\$25 covers the cost of patient care for one day including staffing, medicine and food. We are asking 1,000 partners to give \$25 a month to ensure premium care for all of the guests who will come through our doors.

YOUR ONE DAY COMMITMENT WILL...



Cover the cost of staff required to provide premium health care services.



Provide the necessary medicine and medical supplies needed for each guest.



Feed our guests nutritious meals every day.

[LIVINGROOMINTERNATIONAL.ORG/ONE-DAY](https://livingroominternational.org/one-day)





A New "Place of Peace" at Kimbilio Hospice

SALOME FEUSI-NDEGE, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

At Kimbilio Hospice, we had a vision to build a non-clinical space, a resource center, for children and adult in-patients. Thanks to the generosity of a foundation in Switzerland, our vision became a reality this year. Construction began in January 2024 and the center was officially opened in May. Our resource center, purposely named "Mahali pa Amani" (Kiswahili meaning "Place of Peace"), is one spacious room with a large open-air porch. In this special space, children with mental and physical challenges receive education through informal schooling from Kimbilio's long-time teacher, Jacob Ananda, a former "guest" of Kimbilio from 2011 to 2016. Children freely play in this space, sit or lay in a comfortable corner to relax and read books, and engage in different activities like arts and crafts and singing guided by our counselors, therapists, and caregivers. Adult in-patients also learn new crafts and occupy their minds with stimulating activities. The open-air porch allows for support groups,

family members, and patients to meet in a comfortable, refreshing setting. The young and the old are given many opportunities to be creative, to distract their minds from their illness, to find meaningful occupation in an activity and to socialize with others.

Without a doubt, we know that what goes on inside and outside of our new Place of Peace adds immense value to the excellent care already being offered at Kimbilio. What an incredibly joyful celebration we experienced on May 3rd during its official opening! As our guests enter this special space, our hope is for them to be reminded that they are created in the image of God and they are deeply loved. May our vision "to create a community of compassion that honors life and offers hope" be felt by all at "Mahali pa Amani."



Interior of the new Resource Center showing books, furniture and toys. Guests doing art therapy outside of "Place of Peace", 2023

How it all began...

Fifteen Years of Compassion

ALLISON TARUS,
PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT LIAISON

In April 2008, it was a warm, sunny day in the small, rural village of Chebaiywa. For three years, our 10-member team of healthcare providers and grassroots leaders had been trying to love our neighbors through “seemingly” simple tasks – visiting the homes of the sick, providing a meal, attending their funerals, and figuring out who should care for the orphans left behind. What was in front of us was death without dignity, death with stigma, isolation and loneliness. On our schedule for this day: two home visits. Two children on the verge of death. One lying on the floor of a mud hut kitchen. One held in his mother’s arms. Felix and Flovia. Both of their stories almost ended before they even began. That day, these two little lives caused our team to ask the question: “What does it look like to love in this situation?”

The emaciated bodies and desperate cries of Felix and Flovia stirred our team with a compassion that would not be satisfied until it was put into action.

By God’s grace, Felix and Flovia found themselves surrounded by a community who chose to stand in faith and respond, “let’s try,” even in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges.

Felix and Flovia were started on a special formula and fed every two hours, day and night. Within days, they began to grow. At two and a half years old, Flovia, no more than 15 pounds, learned to walk and to speak in two languages. With her playful spirit, she captured hearts. Felix was a one-year-old who weighed a mere nine pounds. What a beautiful sound it was when he first laughed. To our great loss, after six weeks of treatment, Felix went into respiratory failure and



Flovia (Left) and Felix (Right), 2008

passed away. His death left a void within all who had the privilege of caring for him. While we deeply grieved Felix’s death, we joyously celebrated Flovia’s life.

Our experience of taking care of Felix and Flovia – one who passed away and one who came back to life – revealed to us the unique opportunity we had to provide care, knowing the outcomes are out of our hands. This is what we knew mattered: Felix and Flovia were surrounded by a community that carried them and amplified their still small voices while on this earth; the voice that breathes life and love into the body and soul. The faithful response, “let’s try,” mattered; and became the seed that would grow into the mission and vision of Living Room.

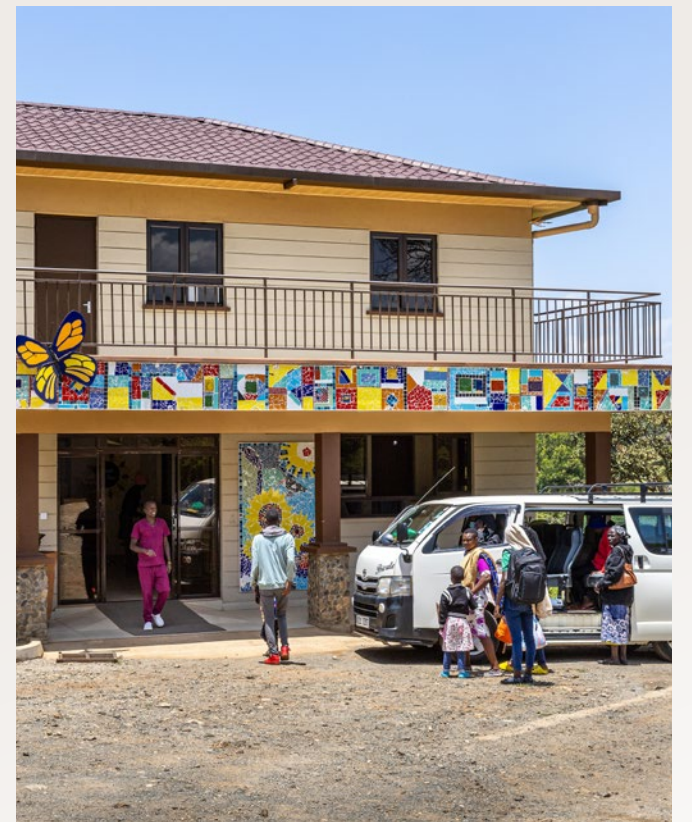
As Living Room marks 15 years of its official existence, we pause to remember that warm, sunny day in 2008. We remember tiny Felix lovingly held in his mother’s arms. His big, brown eyes. His laughter. Some may think his story ended too soon.

Yes, his life ended too soon, but his story... well, it still continues.

We remember the little life of Flovia, lying on the mud floor of her grandmother’s kitchen – struggling to survive. Her story also still continues. Flovia is now 18 years old. In her final year of high school. She smiles, laughs, sings, works diligently in school, welcomes people in, cares for others, and knows deeply that she is loved. She has been given the gift to dream. Her current dream – to study nursing and counseling after she graduates from high school in November.

We wonder...do Felix and Flovia know how tightly woven their stories are with the birth of a community that has now given hope to hundreds of thousands?

Do they know that the gift of their lives has inspired this community to keep diligently seeking to try? That their stories have given thousands of others a chance to re-write their stories – from pain and suffering to life and refuge? They may never fully grasp just how far reaching the gift of their lives truly are, and the community and legacy they inspired. A community committed to love deeply, care sincerely and try no matter the odds, no matter the outcome.



Children & families unload from treatment outside Micah's Guesthouse, 2023



Flovia, 2024





Partner Story:

Experiencing the Hospitality of Kenya

DR. LEIGH MEADE VAUGHAN,
PROGRAM DIR. HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE MEDICINE, MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

My experience in Kimbilio Hospice, Living Room Hospital, and in two Kenyan family homes redefined “hospitality” for me. The generous reception for friend or stranger was like none I have experienced.

In my usual hectic life in the U.S., as a working mom, doctor, and professor at an academic medical center, I am governed by the strict, albeit self-imposed, scaffolding of my “to-do” list. I strive to provide compassionate and effective medical care, but the need to do so with efficiency is a powerful force, shaping my actions more than I wish. In Kenya, at each of the settings where I saw generosity at center stage, I couldn’t help but compare those moments to my usual day.

In Kimbilio Hospice, I was struck by the unhurried hand-feeding of a caregiver for a young patient on our first day. Our team then rounded on 12 patients, reviewed medications, dressed several wounds, and returned to find the caregiver, hands extended, still feeding the child – patience and human touch, the food of life.

At Living Room Hospital (LRH) in Eldoret, I attended a family meeting where my team joined the LRH team to share serious news of a loved one. They took their time, pulled up a chair for every family member, placed them in the sunny spot under the acacia tree, prayed, sang, listened, and held hands with the grieving family, as if there was nowhere else to go and nothing else to do.

As a guest in two Kenyan families’ homes, we were served food made with the same patient hands, welcomed into their family, and given cups of tea, as we listened to their stories and shared our own from across the globe – again, as if there was no place else to go, no dishes to clean, nothing else that needed to be done.

Of course, there are always tasks on the proverbial “to-do” list, but the unique hospitality of Living Room, and those who have built the organization, defy that construct as they graciously welcome you into their lives. They do not ask “How will this turn out? Is this practical?” Rather, they are there in that moment, warmly welcoming you with the most generous gift of their time.



Meet Margaret

Chief Nurse at Kimbilio Hospice

Greetings. My name is Margaret Kanja. I am 33 years old, born and raised in the Central part of Kenya (8-hour drive to Kimbilio). I am married with two lovely children. I began my nursing career in 2010 and after graduating in 2015, commenced work at a hospital in Eldoret. In 2022, I came across an advert shared through social media from Living Room's Kimbilio Hospice, advertising the position of Chief Nurse. I applied immediately, hoping to get an opportunity to work in a hospice, and sure enough God answered my prayers.

I have served at Kimbilio for almost 1 ½ years now as the Chief Nurse, with my main role being to provide leadership to the teams assigned to me, more so to our nurses and caregivers. Every day when I wake up to prepare to go work, I am always thinking about our "guests" (patients) lying in their hospital beds, awaiting someone they can pour out their hearts to, someone to give them one word of encouragement, someone to give them unconditional love, to offer a smile to them and tell them that it's going to be ok. And I always tell myself, that person is me.

I had a bit of a rough time transitioning from treatment to palliative care and hospice. I was so used to treating and discharging patients home when they became well.

I never thought I would practice such a different type of care, but it is now deep in my heart. I have learned so much and gained an incredible experience here. I came to a place where people run to as their last hope, desperately looking for comfort and hope – that place is Kimbilio. This is the only place I have been where patients smile even when they are about to take their last breath. Kimbilio is like a refreshing breeze to many people who are "suffocated" by their health conditions. At first, it was so difficult to watch people dying while I am there doing "nothing." However, I now know it's not a question of when they die, but how they actually died – pain-free, in peace, and with dignity. I am humbled to be part of the team who offers such unique care.

I am so grateful to Living Room for giving me the opportunity to experience this special kind of practice. I thank the visionaries for the big dream that became a reality to help so many people. Thank you to the management for the unwavering support; more blessings to you. To our Kimbilio staff, let's embrace the spirit of teamwork and togetherness as we continue to honor more lives and as we give them hope and comfort. May God enable us to reach more people who are suffering and may we continue to share love with them as we have always done.



Margaret Kanja, Chief Nurse at Kimbilio Hospice, greeting her patient, 2024



Care Beyond the Hospital Walls

DR. ESTHER WANJAMA, DIR. OF CLINICAL SERVICES

Living Room Hospital (LRH), located in the outskirts of Eldoret town, serves a community of approximately 100,000 people. Living Room's vision, to create a community of compassion that honors life and offers hope, is not limited to the community within the hospital but extends beyond its walls.

In seeking to provide quality care to our community, we recently carried out a survey to better understand the health status and needs of the people. It was our privilege to work closely together with our long-time partner, AMPATH, as well as Uasin Gishu County's Public Health Department. The AMPATH implementation team followed a comprehensive scientific process that entailed: designing the questionnaire, capturing it in digital form, providing tablets for data collection, and training. It is important to note that in designing the questionnaire, keen attention was given to identifying children with special needs, reviewing quality of home-based care for chronically

ill persons, assessing the current financing of health in the families, and analysis of factors that contribute directly to health such as water and food availability.

In large part, the success of this project relied on the 10 Community Health Workers (CHWs) from the target population, who conducted the actual interviews to collect the data. Before implementing the project, they participated in a two-day training to learn important interview skills as well as practical skills of how to use the tablets for data collection. In a span of 15 days, the CHWs completed the exercise, interviewing 1,149 individuals from the 984 households in the target population.

With this data, it is our hope to improve health outcomes to the community around us, thus empowering them with dignity and quality of life.



Living Room team visits homes in the community.



Heart & Soul Podcast *Facing Death in Kenya*

On January 12, 2024, Living Room was honored to be featured on the BBC World Service's podcast, Heart & Soul. The episode entitled, "Facing Death in Kenya," dives into the impactful work of Living Room.

"Serious and complex illnesses like cancer are becoming more common in Kenya, and end of life care is a much-needed service for people facing death. In Eldoret, Western Kenya, a group of Christians have made it their life's work to help ease the passing of those with terminal illnesses and find peace in the final days."

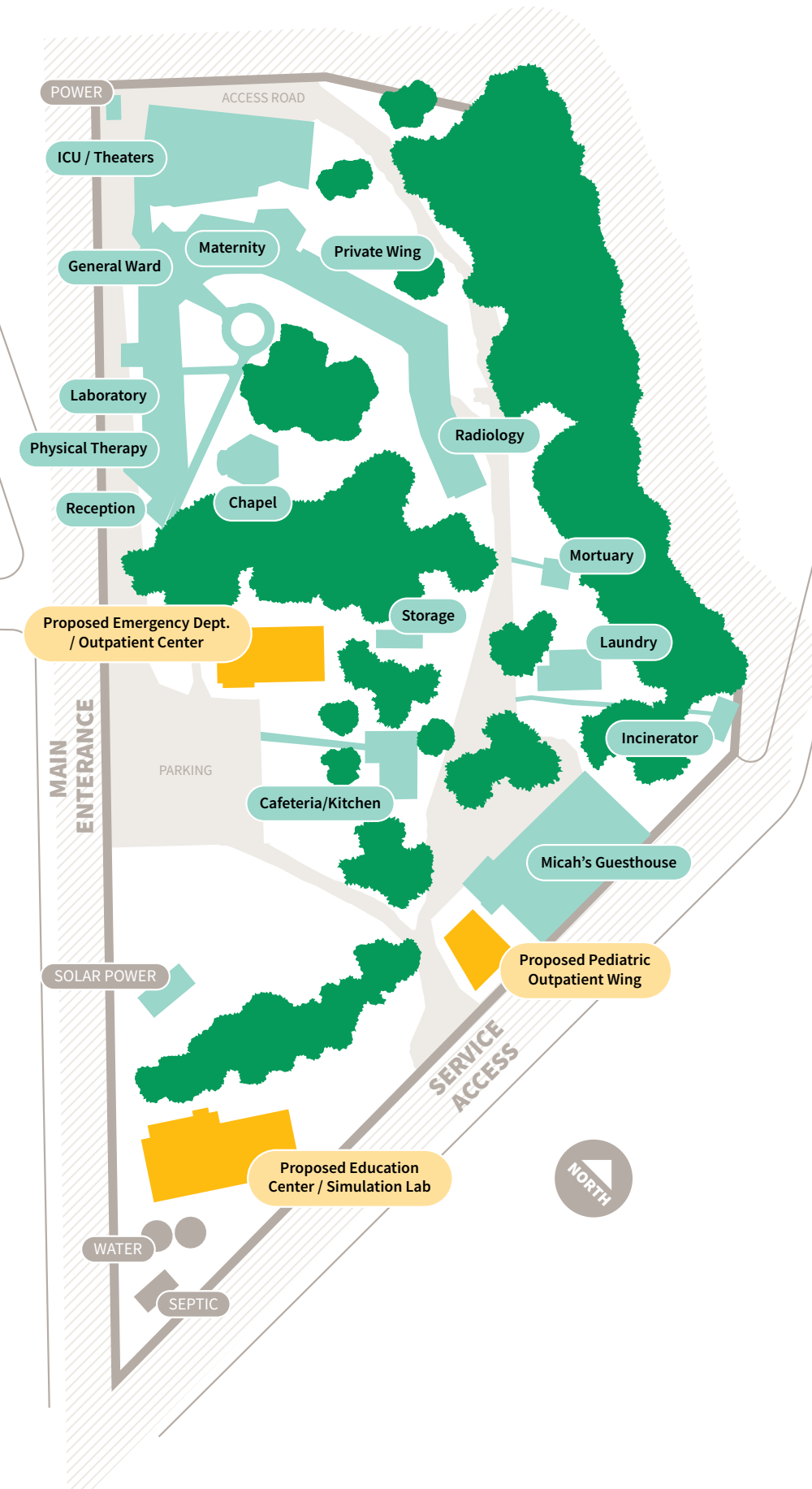
Listen today:



[BBC.CO.UK/PROGRAMMES/W3CT4PKN](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/W3CT4PKN)



Living Room Hospital Future Expansion Projects





Honoring the Life of
Eddah Muthoni

1986 - 2023

We thank God for giving us the opportunity to care for our dear friend, Eddah Muthoni, as a patient as well as to serve with her in the hospice for the past 8 years. Her loving work as a caregiver to our children at Kimbilio Hospice will long be remembered by our team.

~ Her Living Room Family



Asante Sana!

I want to take this moment to say thank you very much to the family of Living Room all over the world. We thank you because of what we were able to accomplish together in 2023 as we served Kenyans in need of affordable and quality healthcare services. Through your partnership in prayer and in deed, we effectively served the thousands of guests and their families who walked through our gates. As the CEO, I want to say thank you on their behalf – your support enabled the sick to feel relief from their pain and suffering; and to bring peace to families who experienced Living Room's love and care. It is an honor to walk together and support one another on this journey. Thank you and God bless you.

DAVID TARUS, CEO

15 years ago, we had a vision to create a community of compassion that honors life and offers hope. Accompaniment has allowed us to walk far and wide together.

Who gets to determine

The limits of what is possible?

And, more importantly, for who?

Or what if? And what should be?

If rockets can land on Mars,

Couldn't clean water be available to all?

If a disease is treatable somewhere,

Then why not here too?

Maybe it's comparing apples to oranges—

Or perhaps just a failure to see

That audacious things are

Only absurd, impractical

Until they come to be.

EXCERPT FROM **BRAVE LOVE, JULI BOIT**



JULI'S BOOK, **BRAVE LOVE**

Embark on an extraordinary journey within the pages of "Brave Love." Guided by the question, "What does it look like to love in this situation?" Juli's memoir emerges as an unyielding testament to her transformative hospice leadership in Kenya, encapsulating the very heartbeat of her stories.

The resonance of this question reverberates through every line, echoing with the cadence of compassion, courage, and vulnerability.

All profits from "Brave Love" go to support the work of Living Room.

PURCHASE TODAY

[JULIBOIT.COM/BRAVE-LOVE](https://juliboit.com/brave-love)



Gratitude Notes

We receive “gratitude notes” from mothers and children who are guests at Micah Guesthouse. Each is facing formidable cancer journeys far away from home. It is our hard privilege to accompany them and we wanted to share their words of thanks with you:

I am Emmanuel, a student at Lelwa Junior Secondary School in Kericho County (a 2 ½ hour drive to the guesthouse). I am 13 years old and in grade 8. Right now, I am at Living Room’s Micah Guesthouse in room 14 while I am receiving treatment at the hospital. Here, we take special and delicious meals. Our compound is very clean. We also get our meals on time. We have everything we need, like water, toilets, and food. In Micah Guesthouse, everyone stays in their own room. We also get time to play. Our teachers are smart and kind. All children are excited to be here at Living Room’s Micah Guesthouse. The bedding is clean, bright, and well-spread. I love staying here. May God bless you all.

My name is Elizabeth Atieno. I want to thank Living Room for the good things they are doing to us. I am here with my grandson who is receiving radiotherapy at MTRH. I am from Kisumu County (a 3 hour drive), and it is my first time here. Thank you for taking us to receive treatment and for bringing us back to Micah Guesthouse. Thank you so much, Living Room.

*First, I want to thank the person who thought of building Micah Guesthouse to help the needy families who come from far away. Secondly, I want to say thank you to those working in the Guesthouse because they help us. I can’t be grateful enough. May God give you the strength to continue serving people. I know it is not an easy job, but you work by the grace of God. For sure, we are in a good place and will not forget the care we have received.
~ Mama Erick, Nakuru County (3½ hour drive)*



The Living Room Organization

TEAM

Our team is unified by our commitment to honoring life and offering hope to our guests and their loved ones. We are comprised of caring individuals with a passion to see the vision of Living Room be achieved in every aspect of the organization.

BOARD

The Board of Directors is comprised of respected leaders from Kenya and the U.S. who, together, guide the strategic direction for the organization.

Peter Boit	Chairman	Pam Malloy	Board Member
David Poole	Chairman	Eric Martin	Board Member
David Bixby	Board Member	Christian Mungai	Board Member
Janet Chesire	Board Member	Allison Tarus	Board Member
Blake Heal	Board Member	David Tarus	Living Room CEO
Isaiah Henry	Board Member	Juli Boit	International Dir., Ex-officio Member
Mary Herbert	Board Member	April Dichosa	U.S. Executive Dir., Ex-officio Member
Scott Kujath	Board Member		

CONTACT

E-mail: info@livingroominternational.org

U.S. Phone: +1 530 246 0693

U.S. Address: PO Box 992094, Redding, CA USA 96099-2094

Kenya Address: PO BOX 4053-30100, Eldoret, Kenya

C R E D I T S

Contributing Writers

*Juli Boit, Allison Tarus, Salome Feusi-Ndege,
Dr. Leigh Meade Vaughan, Margaret Kanja,
Dr. Esther Wanjama, David Tarus*

Photography Credit

*Bob Palermini, Jeremie Banembe,
Naome Kiptoo, Drew Shafer*

Art Direction & Design

Drew Shafer (drew-shafer.com)

Cover Image

Staff care for guests at Kimbilio Hospice

U.S. PO Box 992094, Redding, CA 96099-2094

PO Box 4053-30100, Eldoret, Kenya

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