THE JEDIDIAH TRUST ZIMBABWE NEWSLETTER · OCTOBER 2026

SEEN

Making Invisible Children Seen

Inside: the statistic that is only half the story.
The student who paid a stranger’s fees and hid her face.
And the one thing you can do this week.

Stories · Research · Resources · Ways to help

WELCOME BACK

A Letter From Our Founder

Dear friends, partners and supporters,

Right now a child in Zimbabwe is sitting in a classroom carrying a secret. Their parent is in prison. They have been taught never to say it out loud.

It has been too long since we wrote to you. The silence was not because the work stopped. It was because the work grew faster than our words. There were children to visit and families to walk with and doors to knock on.

Today we are back with the story of what your support is building across Zimbabwe. It is the story of children who carry a sentence they never received. They carry the shame and the hunger and the questions alone. Until someone sees them.

We exist so that no child stays invisible.

This issue is a little different. Alongside our stories from the field you will find the research and the practical guidance we have been sharing because understanding is where support begins.

Start anywhere. But read to the last story. It is the one that moved us most.

With gratitude and hope,

Lovemore Chikwanda
Founder and Chief Executive Officer
JEDIDIAH TRUST ZIMBABWE

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WHO WE ARE

From One Town to Ten Provinces

Jedidiah Trust Zimbabwe is a registered nonprofit based in Norton. Since 2019 we have walked alongside children of incarcerated parents and their caregivers and the imprisoned parents themselves. We began in one town. Today our work reaches all ten provinces of Zimbabwe.

Our work rests on four promises.

Psychosocial support
Our Feel to Learn curriculum gives children the words for what they feel so grief and shame do not have to stay hidden.

Education assistance
Uniforms and fees and stationery keep children in class where stability and hope are built.

Caregiver empowerment
The grandmother or aunt or older sibling who stepped in is supported because a steady caregiver is a child's best protection.

Family reintegration
We support the family before release and at release and well after. For the parent and the child and the caregiver.

Who we work with

We partner with the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service under an active memorandum of understanding. We are also a member of six networks. These relationships let us reach children inside the system and outside it.

CIPA Children of Incarcerated Parents in Africa
INCCP International Coalition of Children with Incarcerated Parents
SANOP Southern Africa Network of Prisons
NANGO National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
AFWAG Alliance For Women and Girls
ZNCWC Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children

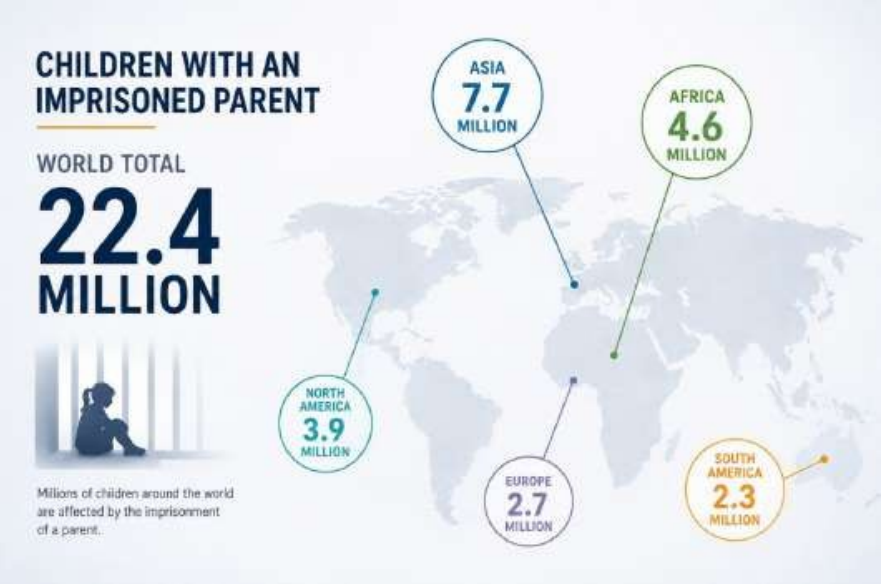
> Restoring hope. Rebuilding futures. One family at a time.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

The Children Nobody Counts

Behind every inmate is often a child. One who did not commit a crime and still carries its consequences.

When a parent is incarcerated the sentence rarely ends with them. Disrupted schooling. Strained caregiving. Stigma and silence. In Zimbabwe these children remain one of the least recognised groups in child protection conversations. No dedicated national policy names them or counts them or plans for them.



What our work tells us

1,240	**420**	**380**	**210**	**92%**
children reached with psychosocial support	caregivers supported to sustain stable homes	incarcerated parents engaged in correctional facilities	former inmates supported through reintegration	school retention rate in our programmes

These numbers matter. But they raise a harder question. How many children are we not reaching simply because nobody is counting them?

Zimbabwe sits inside a much bigger picture

Globally an estimated 22.4 million children have a parent in prison. Africa accounts for roughly 4.6 million of them. Most are never formally counted. So most never enter a child protection plan.

That is the gap we work inside every day.

UNDERSTANDING THE RESEARCH

Is It Inevitable?

You will often hear that children of incarcerated parents are six times more likely to be imprisoned themselves. It is a number meant to create urgency. But is it destiny?

The honest answer is more nuanced and more hopeful.

Much of the research behind the six times figure is correlational. It compares children who experienced parental incarceration with those who did not and finds a strong association. Researchers who try to isolate the causal effect find a real but considerably smaller one. One large US study found that parental incarceration raised a child's likelihood of a teen conviction by roughly 2 percentage points. It did not find a sixfold multiplier. A major Scandinavian study found effects that varied significantly by context.

None of this means the risk is not real. Parental incarceration is a significant adverse childhood experience. But the headline number bundles poverty and instability and family involvement in the justice system together with the incarceration itself. It is one risk factor among several. It is not a fixed outcome written into a child the moment a parent is sentenced.

> Parental incarceration raises real risk through mechanisms we understand and can interrupt. That is not a smaller problem. It is a solvable one.

What research says protects a child

01	**Connection with the parent** Visits and calls and letters rather than a relationship left to quietly dissolve.
02	**A stable and consistent caregiver** Someone who can provide routine while the family navigates an unstable situation.
03	**Continuity in school and friendships** Disruption compounds risk. Stability interrupts it.
04	**Structured psychosocial support** Giving a child language for what they are experiencing rather than leaving them to process it alone.

This is the logic behind our model: Feel to Learn and consistent caregiver engagement and structured contact between children and parents where possible. It shows up in our numbers. Our programmes hold a **92% school retention rate** in a context where disrupted schooling is one of the clearest risk pathways. One figure does not prove causation and no single organisation's data can carry that weight. But it is what the research says should happen when the protective factors are present.

THE ONES WHO STEP IN

It’s Not Just the Child Who Carries This

When a parent goes to prison someone has to step in overnight. Usually without warning. Usually without support.

Research shows a consistent pattern. A large share of these children end up in the care of grandparents or other relatives often because the other parent is not available either. One US study found that more than a fifth of children with an incarcerated parent were being raised by relatives. Most incarcerated mothers named a grandparent as the one who stepped in. This resonates with our own research here in Zimbabwe.

That stepping in comes at a cost few people talk about.

01 **Financial strain**
Kinship caregivers are far more likely to fall below the poverty line than caregivers in general. Often while managing costs the child’s other parent would normally have covered.

02 **Logistical burden**
Arranging visits and affording prison phone calls and navigating schools and services on a child’s behalf.

03 **Emotional toll**
Caregivers absorb the child’s grief and confusion on top of their own. They manage a loss that friends and neighbours rarely acknowledge the way they would a death.

04 **Stigma**
Many caregivers report being quietly avoided by their own community at the exact moment they need support the most.

> Caregiver support cannot be an afterthought. It has to sit at the centre of this work beside support for the child.

POLICY AND PROTECTION

A Gap Worth Closing Together

Zimbabwe already has real child protection law: a Children's Act, constitutional protections and a functioning national case management system. That is a genuine foundation. The opportunity now is to extend what exists so it reaches children of incarcerated parents inside prison walls and outside them.

What the law covers

The Children's Act (Chapter 5:06) permits infants to remain in prison with an incarcerated mother up to age two. After that the child moves to relatives or an institution. That is a narrow starting point. It governs a small number of infants inside prison. It does not yet reach the far larger number of children who live outside with a relative or caregiver.

Where implementation can strengthen

In Zimbabwe's own report to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child it was noted that some children have stayed in prison with their mothers for over two years. Often no alternative care placement was ready. The Committee's recommendation was constructive: expedite alternative care arrangements and deploy dedicated child protection officers.

Why naming the category matters

The National Case Management System names orphans and abuse survivors and children in conflict with the law and children in poverty. Children of incarcerated parents are not yet a category of their own. That is not a criticism. Systems are built category by category as needs become visible. Policy follows visibility. Named categories get funding lines and officers and a place in the statistics that shape budgets.

Where Jedidiah Trust fits in

Our work with the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service gives us a collaborative channel to support families through the system as it stands. Our membership of CIPA Africa, INCCP, SANOP and NANGO lets us contribute evidence and advocate for formal recognition. Direct service will always be necessary because children need support today. But we also help build the evidence base and stand ready to support government in closing this gap together.

REINTEGRATION

Coming Home Is Not the Happy Ending It Looks Like

We assume the hard part ends the day a parent walks out of prison.

Research says otherwise.

Coming home is its own transition. Fewer children end up living with a formerly incarcerated parent than did before the sentence. This is especially true of older children and those who had less contact during the separation. For some families behaviour challenges persist or worsen after release before they improve.

Why? Because the child adjusted to the absence. New routines. A different sense of who is in charge. Sometimes a new primary caregiver. Reunification asks them to adjust again in the opposite direction. Often with as little warning as the first time.

What research shows actually helps

01	**Stable housing and steady income** Reunification rarely holds without a stable base to reunite around.
02	**Consistency of contact during the sentence** Children who stayed connected through visits and calls and letters tend to bring the parent back into daily life more easily.
03	**Family level support** Programmes that work with the whole family system and not only the returning parent show better outcomes for children.
04	**Realistic expectations** Treat release as the start of a new adjustment period and not the end of the story.

This is why our work does not stop at reintegration as a single event. We support the family before release and at release and well after. For the parent and the child and the caregiver who held things together in between. So far we have supported **210 former inmates** through reintegration.

> The sentence has a release date. The adjustment doesn’t come with one.

WHERE HOPE GROWS

The Field That Sends Children to School

At Suri Suri in Chegutu the day starts early. Before the sun is fully up there are people in the field.

Two of them once served time in prison. Today they supervise the work on six hectares of land at Suri Suri. Ten caregivers work beside them. Each one stepped in to raise a child when a parent was taken away. Together they grow maize and okra and vegetables.

Some of it feeds their own tables. The rest is sold. The maize goes to the Grain Marketing Board. The okra goes to the community and to vendors. What it earns flows into our Back to School Fund.

> Two people who know what it is to start again. Ten who held a family together. One field that keeps a child in school.

This is what restoration looks like when it has roots. It does not wait for a miracle. It grows.

Help this field grow. Seed and tools and fertiliser make every season stronger. Write to **jedidiahtrustzim@gmail.com** or call **+263 716 497 900**.

EVERYDAY SUPPORT

Teachers Are Often the First to Notice

A child who suddenly stops raising their hand. One who flinches when asked to bring a parent to career day. Falling grades with no obvious cause. A sudden silence around a subject that used to come up freely.

These are common signs among children navigating a parent's incarceration. Families often cannot or will not disclose it. So teachers are frequently the first adults to sense that something has changed without knowing what.

What a teacher can watch for

- A child who withdraws from class participation
- Discomfort around family related tasks and events
- Falling grades with no obvious cause
- A sudden silence on subjects that used to come up freely

Schools do not need to solve this alone. But a teacher who knows what to watch for and where to refer a child can be the difference between a child struggling silently for years and a child getting help early.

What to do next

01 **Keep the relationship steady**
Be the adult who treats the child as a whole child and not as a situation.

02 **Do not ask them to explain**
If they want to talk they will. Ask how they are and what they are into and how school is going.

03 **Know where to refer**
The Department of Social Development and the Victim Friendly Unit of the Zimbabwe Republic Police are doors we use ourselves. Or write to us.

That is why our work includes caregiver and school linked support and not only direct work with the child. If you are an educator and this resonates we would love to hear what you have noticed in your own classroom. Write to us at **jedidiahtrustzim@gmail.com**.

EVERYDAY SUPPORT

Small Things That Cost Almost Nothing

You do not need to run a programme to help a child whose parent is in prison. Most of the support these families receive comes from the people around them: neighbours, church members, teachers, employers and relatives. Small things from those people carry more weight than most of us realise.

Four things to do

Keep inviting them

Families affected by incarceration often get quietly dropped from gatherings because people do not know what to say. Being invited as if nothing changed tells a child they still belong.

Help the caregiver

The grandmother or aunt who stepped in is often stretched thin. A lift to a prison visit or a bag of groceries or an hour of childcare can matter enormously.

Don’t ask about the parent

If they want to talk they will. Ask how they are and what they are into. Treat them as a whole child and not as a situation.

Watch your words in public

Stigma rarely arrives as cruelty. It arrives as whispers and pointed silences and jokes. Children hear all of it.

Five things worth unlearning

“Where’s your dad / mum?”
Asked casually in front of other kids it forces a child to lie or expose something they have been taught to hide.

“At least you still have your mum / dad.”
It minimises the loss of the parent who is gone. The child is not grieving in fractions.

“Be strong for your family.”
It often lands as “don’t show us you’re struggling” which is the opposite of what helps.

“Your parent made bad choices.”
Even when true it reads to a child as a verdict on them too.

Silence
Avoiding the subject entirely can feel like confirmation that something shameful happened.

What actually helps. Ask what they need rather than assuming. Let them bring it up in their own words. Never require them to explain or justify their family’s situation to be treated normally. None of this needs special training. Just awareness.

FROM THE FIELD

On the Doorstep

Family visits in Tynwald, Kuwadzana and Dzivarasekwa

Behind every number in a report is a child waiting at a gate. In Tynwald, Kuwadzana and Dzivarasekwa our team knocked on doors and sat with families and listened. Sometimes what a child needs is a school uniform that fits or a bag of food or a pencil that is not worn down to a stub. Sometimes it is simply someone who listens.

Our latest work at a glance

4 family visits across Tynwald, Kuwadzana and Dzivarasekwa	**7** children reached with food, clothing, uniforms, fees and stationery	**100+** people at our youth suicide awareness campaign	**35** young people in our mentorship class	**20** teenagers at our Let’s Talk session

The children we visited were also referred to the Department of Social Development, Shamwari yeMwanasikana and the Victim Friendly Unit. Help does not end at our gate. We walk with each family until the right door opens.

Speaking up about suicide

More than 100 people joined our youth suicide awareness campaign at Christ Embassy Norton. Young people talked openly about the pressures they carry and about how to notice when a friend is struggling and how to help.

If a young person you know is struggling, Childline Zimbabwe is free to call on **116**.

Mentorship that sticks

35 young people took part in our mentorship class guided by three facilitators. Mentors do not need to have all the answers. They need to keep showing up.

FROM THE FIELD

Let’s Talk: Where Silence Breaks

Teenagers aged 15 to 17 at Let’s Talk

Let’s Talk at Chikurubi Female Prison

Twenty teenagers sat in a circle. Many of them had never said out loud what it feels like to have a parent in prison. By the end of the session the room was louder than we expected.

Children with incarcerated parents often grieve in secret. Let’s Talk gives them a safe place to be heard. It reminds them that they are not alone and that nothing about their situation is their fault.

> A sentence should never mean silence.

A circle of hope at Chikurubi Female Prison

Our team also sat down with the women of Chikurubi Female Prison. Not as strangers looking in but as family gathering close. Under the shade of the veranda in a circle of trust we listened and shared and reminded one another that no woman there is invisible.

Let’s Talk gives mothers behind these walls a safe space to speak about the children they carry in their hearts every single day. We saw resilience. We saw sisterhood. We saw hope refusing to be locked away.

To every mother in that circle: your children are seen. Your voice matters. And we will keep showing up.

FROM THE FIELD

Young Advocates Rising

Norton Junior Councillors in training

Standing with the girl child in Norton

#CentredOnChildren

Thirty two Norton Junior Councillors are becoming child advocates. Together with our partner Men 4 Equality we are training them in child protection and safeguarding and mentorship. Sessions run monthly from September 2026 to February 2027.

These young leaders will carry what they learn into their schools and communities.

> We are not only helping children. We are raising children who help children.

International Day of the Girl Child

On 11 October we stood with the girl child in Norton. With very little money we created a space where girls could be heard.

For a girl whose parent is incarcerated the risks are heavier. Poverty and early marriage and dropping out of school can come quickly. Our promise is simple: every girl deserves to stay in school and stay safe and dream big.

FROM THE FIELD

Not at My School

Chiedza Primary School, Norton

Norton District Child Protection Committee

Hundreds of blue uniforms. One united voice.

At Chiedza Primary School in Norton we stood before an entire school and said it loud enough for every corridor and every classroom and every home to hear: GBV has no place here. Not at my school. Not anywhere.

These children are not just learners. They are guardians of their own safety and they became messengers of change. They sat under the trees in the sun and listened. They are taking the message home with them.

Protecting a child is not a one day campaign. It is a promise a whole community makes and keeps. To every teacher and parent and officer who stood with us: thank you for choosing our children's safety over silence.

Stronger together: the Norton DCPC

We joined the Norton District Child Protection Committee meeting hosted by the Department of Social Development and the room said it all. In one space we sat alongside the Zimbabwe Republic Police Victim Friendly Unit, the Judiciary Services and National Prosecuting Authority, community health nurses from the Ministry of Health, Norton Town Council, Inspired Angels Network, Tsungirirai Welfare Organisation, FASAA, NZCD, Ndaiziva Capacity and more.

One agenda. One mission: reviewing child protection issues and sharing updates and planning real interventions for the children of Norton. This is what child protection looks like when it works. Government and police and health and judiciary and civil society at the same table with pens down and notebooks open listening to each other.

Forums like this keep the needs of children of incarcerated parents firmly on the district agenda. Thank you to the Department of Social Development, Norton, for convening us.

A STORY THAT MOVED US

One Student. One Child. One Chance.

Her face is covered because she asked for nothing. Not even to be seen.

This is what “making invisible children seen” looks like.

She is a student at the University of Zimbabwe. She saw our work. The story of children carrying the weight of a parent’s incarceration while still trying to hold onto their education and their dreams. She did not just like the post. She did not just share it.

She showed up. In person. With her own money. To pay school fees for a child she has never met. A child whose mother is in prison and whose path to school was about to close.

She asked for nothing in return. She simply wanted a child to keep learning. This is what compassion in action looks like. This is what happens when one person decides that a stranger’s child matters.

To every quiet giver and every silent supporter and every person who has ever believed that these children deserve a future: thank you. You are proof that Zimbabwe still has a heart for its most invisible children.

You can be the next person to change a child’s story.
Turn the page to meet the people who already walk with us. Then see how you can join them.

WITH GRATITUDE

The People Who Made This Possible

No child is made visible by one organisation alone. Thank you to every partner and every giver who has shown up for the children of Zimbabwe.

PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Direct Aid Program (DAP), Australian Embassy

United States Embassy Zimbabwe

Nyaradzo

Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)

Siboniwe Foundation

Norton Town Council

INDIVIDUALS

Mrs Thomu · Mrs Dee · Nicole Uzeni
and the quiet givers who asked not to be named.

GOVERNMENT AND JUSTICE

Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service · Department of Social Development, Norton · Zimbabwe Republic Police Victim Friendly Unit

NETWORKS

Children of Incarcerated Parents in Africa (CIPA) · International Coalition of Children with Incarcerated Parents (INCCP) · Southern Africa Network of Prisons (SANOP) · National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO) · Alliance For Women and Girls (AFWAG) · Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children (ZNCWC)

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Men 4 Equality · Christ Embassy Norton · Chiedza Primary School · Shamwari yeMwanasikana · Asibambane · Mwanasikana Wanhasi · Zacro · Norton Junior Councillors

Are you a government department, NGO, company or community organisation working in child protection or education? We would love to connect.
+263 716 497 900 · jedidiahtrustzim@gmail.com

LOOKING AHEAD

Zimbabwe Will Host the World

SEPTEMBER 2027 · ZIMBABWE

Invisible No More.

In September 2027 Jedidiah Trust Zimbabwe will host a landmark conference on children with incarcerated parents. Delegates from many countries will gather in Zimbabwe with one message. We are grateful to every partner who has already said yes.

How you can be part of it

Sponsor
A delegate or a session or a field visit.

Speak
Share research and practice from your own context.

Attend
In person or online.

Spread the word
Among colleagues and networks and friends.

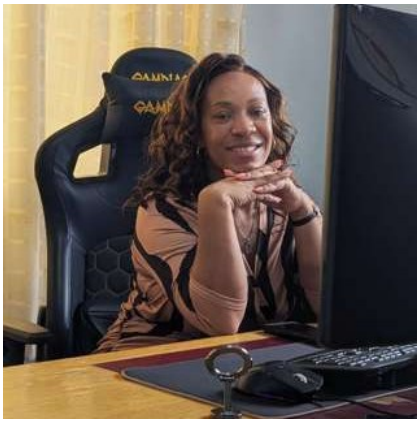
Sponsorship or participation: **jedidiahtrustzim@gmail.com** or **+263 716 497 900**

GOVERNANCE

Meet Our Board

Behind every home visit and every Let's Talk circle is a board that guards the mission and keeps us accountable and helps us grow responsibly. We are grateful for their time and their wisdom and their belief in children who are too often unseen.

Violet Mangwenya
Chairperson



Kudzai Simbi
Secretary

Wilson Phiri
Board Member

Primrose Sahondo
Board Member

Lovemore Chikwanda
Founder, CEO and Ex officio

Our management team

The board provides governance and strategic direction. Day to day our work is led by our Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Lovemore Chikwanda, together with our programmes, finance and administration team.

KEEP LEARNING

Resources

This newsletter is meant to be educative so here is where to go next. Every article in this issue is available in full with sources at jedidiahtrustzim.org.

Our programmes

Feel to Learn: our psychosocial curriculum for children aged 5 to 17

Safe and Strong: our course on safety and protection

Let's Talk: safe circles for teenagers and for mothers in prison

#CentredOnChildren: training Norton Junior Councillors as child advocates

Research behind this issue

Harvard Kennedy School, The Intergenerational Effects of Parental Incarceration

NBER Working Paper 24186

Bhuller et al., Measuring the Intergenerational Effects of Incarceration

Poehlmann-Tynan, A Developmental Perspective on Children With Incarcerated Parents

Televerde Foundation, The Facts About Intergenerational Incarceration

African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Concluding Observations on Zimbabwe

Children's Act (Chapter 5:06); UNICEF Zimbabwe; OHCHR

Networks we belong to

CIPA: Children of Incarcerated Parents in Africa

INCCP: International Coalition of Children with Incarcerated Parents

SANOP: Southern Africa Network of Prisons

NANGO: National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations

AFWAG: Alliance For Women and Girls

ZNCWC: Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children

If a child is in danger or needs help now

Childline Zimbabwe: 116 (toll free)

The Department of Social Development and the Zimbabwe Republic Police Victim Friendly Unit and Shamwari yeMwanasikana for girls and young women are the doors our team refers families to. You can also reach us on +263 716 497 900.

Know someone who should read this? Forward SEEN to one person who cares. Every new reader is one more person who sees.

BE PART OF THE STORY

A Child Doesn’t Need a Miracle

A child needs someone who shows up. You can be that someone.

Your gift	What it does
$10	A stationery pack for a child for a term
$25	A food hamper for a family in crisis
$50	A school uniform set for one child
$100	School fees support for one child
$200+	Sponsor a Let’s Talk or mentorship session

Walk with us

Individuals

Sponsor a child’s school fees or stationery or uniform. Become a Friend of Jedidiah. Give an hour or a skill or a lift to a prison visit.

Companies

Sponsor uniform and stationery drives. Back a Let’s Talk or mentorship session. Give through your corporate responsibility programme or let your staff volunteer with us.

NGOs and networks

Joint programming and referrals and shared research and advocacy. Children of incarcerated parents are best served when organisations work together.

Churches and communities

Host a Let’s Talk circle. Run a food hamper drive. Or keep inviting the families who have quietly been left out.

Other ways to help: volunteer your time or your skills. Sponsor a delegate or a session at the 2027 conference. Share this newsletter with one person who cares.

To our board and our volunteers and our partners and every person who gave a dollar or an hour or a prayer: thank you. You are the reason a child in Norton can say “someone saw me.”

> These children are not invisible. They are seen.

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