

# PORTRAITS OF **PROMISE**



ORPHAN'S PROMISE NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2023



# Nurturing a dream

Zuun is in the fifth grade. She has big glasses, a soft smile, and a tender heart. This 12-year-old dreams of being a business owner and fashion designer. Her family came to the United States in 2009 as refugees from Myanmar. She lives with her mom and sisters in St. Louis. Come and see how your partnership with Orphan's Promise is making a lasting impact for Zuun and her future.

**These are the stories.  
These are the souls.  
These are the portraits of the  
lives we're changing.**







## A DIFFICULT START

When Zuun was born, she was in the NICU for three months. She was diagnosed with necrotizing enterocolitis, an inflammation of the intestines that eventually leads to the death of intestinal tissues. Zuun's family was scared that she would not survive. Parts of her small and large intestines had to be surgically removed. She continued to face medical complications that left her in the hospital at least twice a year for the next 10 years. Zuun still struggles with fatigue and leg pain. Her body has a hard time absorbing enough nutrients. And because Zuun has trouble concentrating, her mom worries about her ability to keep up in school. Fortunately, her older sisters were part of the Firm Foundation Tutoring (FFT) program. So, for the past several years, Zuun has connected with a tutor to get the help she needs to succeed.

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***In St. Louis, 40% of children are born into poverty, and many don't have access to the support they need outside of school to thrive academically.<sup>1</sup>***



## LONG-TERM MENTORSHIP

For 30 years, the FFT program has seen the fruit of keeping long-term relationships with families.

FFT exists to bridge the gap for kids in grades K–12. They equip more than 100 volunteers to come alongside children in at-risk communities who are falling behind academically to tutor them in reading and math. Violence, crime, and poverty are prevalent in both the South City and the West End neighborhoods where these tutors serve. The goal is to provide a safe space for students to learn and grow. Kids can receive tutoring twice a week at a location within their community.

Because FFT values relationships, kids can continue to meet with their tutor for on-going mentorship even after their academic needs are met. Students hone their academic skills while experiencing the joy of a positive connection with a tutor who encourages them. During the summer, the program also offers a five-week course with academics, as well as enrichment activities like drama, art, and gardening.

FFT has truly helped Zuun and her sisters academically. The program's long-term commitment to helping families in the area has led to lasting change.

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***Many of the children in at-risk communities are part of a English Language Learner family (where English is not the first language). The parents, though involved, are often not able to help their children with homework.<sup>2</sup>***





## A FAMILY AFFAIR

Zuun's sister Buah Pi joined FFT in middle school. Zuun's other sister Nem Lek served as a tutor and completed an internship through the program. She's gone on to earn a B.S. in biology and is currently pursuing a degree in nursing.

FFT went on to help Zuun, who was struggling in kindergarten. Her tutors have patiently worked with her and have seen her improve significantly over time. She has been able to explore her artistic endeavors. She loves to draw, which is why she wants to be a fashion designer one day. She says her favorite part about tutoring is: "I learn more, I learn faster—and I have fun!"

Her tutor Rachel shared, **"Zuun is very empathetic and cares deeply for others. She is a great artist and is motivated to succeed. Zuun always enthusiastically shares details about her day with me. In my time with Zuun, I've seen her reading improve exponentially. She's also become more confident and more willing to try new things. It's a privilege to work with Zuun. She never fails to brighten my day!"**



## INCREASE YOUR GENEROSITY!

The most effective way to give and maximize your gift is to give a recurring monthly gift. If you'd like to become a monthly partner with Orphan's Promise, please fill out the enclosed "You Pledge, We Pledge" form and return it in the Business Reply Envelope. We'll count on you to ensure our commitment to these children is fulfilled!

**If you'd like to give a special gift to Orphan's Promise,  
there are four easy ways you can give:**

Give online by visiting **OrphansPromise.org/Promise**

**Text PROMISE to 71777** and give from your mobile phone

**Call 1-800-818-4016** to give by phone

You can **mail a check** made out to Orphan's Promise to:

Orphan's Promise  
977 Centerville Turnpike  
Virginia Beach, VA 23463

**Thanks for your generosity.  
We look forward to making a difference together.**





## A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD

Zuun's mom said, **"I would most definitely recommend the FFT program to other families, especially immigrant families. The program not only helps my children improve their English skills, but it also alleviates the challenge of not being able to help them since English is not my strongest suit."**

One of the difficulties for refugee parents is the stress of not being able to help their children with homework because of the language barrier. FFT gives parents peace of mind that their child is getting the educational support they need.

With the ongoing help from Rachel and other tutors, kids like Zuun can grow and thrive. Instead of falling behind, their unique, individual needs are being met. Now, Zuun is making solid progress in school, both academically and socially. She is well on her way to making her dreams of being an artist and fashion designer come true. Thank you for being part of making miracles like this possible!

***"I LEARN MORE, I LEARN  
FASTER—AND I HAVE FUN!"***



1. "Why Poverty," Mission: St. Louis, accessed August 17, 2023, <https://www.missionstl.org/why-poverty>.

2. "Child Well-Being," stlouis-mo.gov, accessed August 17, 2023, <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/mayor/initiatives/resilience/equity/youth/wellbeing/index.cfm>.





give us a call: 1-800-818-4016

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