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## Family First: Helping Kids Make A Difference



Cindy Hsu ([http://wcbstv.com/bios/local\\_bio\\_201171407.html](http://wcbstv.com/bios/local_bio_201171407.html))  
Reporting

*(CBS) NEW YORK* A big complaint I hear from a lot of parents is that their children don't realize how fortunate they are to have everything from the latest gadget to plenty of food on the table.

Siamanda Chege is a Manhattan mom who was born and raised in a small town in Kenya, and is now trying to turn things around for kids in the area as well as her two young daughters, by building a bridge between the children here, and those in the orphanage she started in her hometown.

### What inspired you to start an orphanage?

I was inspired by my late father, the Rev. Patrick Chege who was a native Kenyan and missionary in Africa, who was particularly devoted to easing the suffering of children and women especially the widows.

I aspire to continue his mission and give as much hope as possible to the children and women. There have been a lot of AIDS cases in the villages, and as result we have great numbers of orphans and widows in the area.

### Tell me about the children.

All our children have in one way or another been affected by AIDS. Our children are AIDS free but have gone through traumatic situations like malnutrition and rejection.

### **You have found a unique way to help support the orphanage.**

When I started the orphanage, I knew that I needed to have a plan on how to sustain it. Deep in my heart was a pain for all the women in the village who needed to somehow support their families and themselves but had few resources. My husband, who has a business background, suggested that I start a business that could employ women with few skills who do not have much if any education.

Most if not every woman in my village can knit and or crochet so this seemed like a good choice. I decided to get the best yarns and ship them to Kenya. Today our products are carried by many high-end stores in the US and Canada.

The children's knit website is Bebe Ravi Collections (<http://www.beberavi.com/>)

### **How are you bringing children from the orphanage together with kids in New York?**

We have a pen pal team that is organizing all kinds of activities for our children with the ultimate goal of connecting them to the orphans that we are supporting. For instance, we have the pen pal events that have taken place in Manhattan and Hoboken, New Jersey. At both events, all children receive a photo and information about his or her new pen pal at the Chege orphanage. We talk a little bit about Kenya, where the orphans live and we have lots of related activities. Most children never forget this experience. We also have the orphans write back, and that way we form a bonding relationship between the children and the orphans.

### **How can people get involved?**

We are looking for volunteers in every field. We have a 501C3 status, so all donations are tax deductible. Monetary donations help a lot, but we love services or any other kind of help.

### **What is your dream for the children in the orphanage and their pen pals in New York?**

My dream is that our children here in America will forge a lasting friendship with the orphans. I totally believe that both the American children and the orphans would learn so much from each other. For my

children in particular, I hope that they can learn to appreciate what they have and be so thankful for everything and most of all aspire to make a difference when they grow up.

### **Is there a chance the children could be adopted?**

Our children are between 3 and 15 years old. We have not explored that route yet. Our answer to this question for the moment is that you can support the children while they live at the orphanage in Kenya. You can support them and even visit them at the orphanage.

### **Final thoughts?**

We all can make a difference in one way or another. There are many organizations out there that are making major differences in all kinds of lives. Lets all look into giving back a little. Lets realize and be grateful at how lucky and blessed we are. If anyone has no organization in mind, you can come help us.

You can learn more about us at The Patrick Chege Memorial Orphanage (<http://www.chegeorphans.com/>) and again at Bebe Ravi Collections (<http://www.beberavi.com/>)

Send Comments to Cindy Hsu (<mailto:chsu@cbs.com>)

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