



## The care Miracle to OBAKENG's, Normalises AIDS among families & Churches in Protea Glen, Soweto.

Obakeng is a 4yr old boy who lives with his grandparents and cousins. He lives in Soweto Protea Glen extension 11, Gauteng Province in South Africa.

His mother died of HIV in 2006 when Obakeng was two months old. His aunt took him in for four months and after seeing that she could not cope, she brought him back to his grandmother. At that time Oba was very sick and weak. Molly, the aunt of Obakeng's mother, went to see Oba's grandmother to ask permission to take care of Oba without discussing it with her husband Thabo.\*

The grandmother agreed and Molly, the aunt of Oba's mother, brought Oba home with her. He was very sick over and during this period. There were fears and concerns within the family of Molly, especially the husband who was against the idea of foster parenting. Thabo, Molly's husband thought that it was an added burden to his family. Thabo kept asking the wife, "Where will you bury this child? Who will cover the funeral costs?... During the first week, after seeing that Oba was not getting any better, Molly took him to a local doctor for treatment. The doctor gave her medication for the child and they returned home. After a few days

Oba was not getting any better, so Molly took him to the nearby clinic again and they referred him to Baragwanath hospital in Johannesburg that same day.

On arrival at the hospital, they got attention immediately and the

doctor's asked Molly for consent to test Oba for HIV and she agreed. While she was waiting for the results they gave her counselling. It turned out the boy was HIV positive. He was admitted and they put him on treatment immediately.

Oba was hospitalised for three and a half months. During that time Molly visited him every morning and evenings and did not miss a day. She did not have money to commute everyday as she was not working and Thabo was not supportive at that time. The hardest thing to do was to tell her family that the little boy was HIV positive, but she gathered the strength to do so. Her children were concerned that when Oba was discharged from the hospital he would infect them. Thabo was scolding her saying; "where are you going to bury that child? Do you have a funeral policy that will cover the costs of the funeral?" Something Thabo kept saying in the early stages.

Molly was strong and did not let all the problems discourage her or influence her to stop loving Oba. She was even more determined to help the little boy. The home care of Lufuno was with her all the time for encouragement. She reported to her church and the congregation gave her support and love. Every morning and evening some members would come to the house for prayer. The church members contributed food and clothing for the family to help raise the little boy. They even gave transport money (at least Rand50) for Molly to visit Oba in the hospital.

Molly used to pray with and support the mothers of the other children in the HIV/AIDS ward. One day when she came to visit Oba, she found that all the other children had

been discharged. She was very sad because she thought that Oba will not recover but the other mothers supported her and encouraged her to keep hoping.

Eventually Oba was discharged and transferred to the outpatient HIV clinic in Baragwanath. Molly had to take him to the day clinic every day. Once more the church helped her with transport money. Molly's husband was still fearful that the child could die in the house and was concerned about how they would overcome the challenge he was foreseeing.

After a meeting with the whole family, and getting the agreement of the children, Molly spoke to her husband and he agreed that they could keep Oba, especially as he was starting to recover. Molly taught her family on how to administer ARV drugs to Obakeng while she was away (to town or even when she got home late).

As Molly was caring for Oba, she became conscious of the AIDS epidemic. This was true to her family. She recalls when she was pregnant 9 years ago. She visited the clinic and was diagnosed of a Sexually transmitted Disease. She didn't get furious to her husband, Thabo, but instead she thought of opening the issue up with Thabo and negotiate for safer sex with him. Thabo agreed and since then, 2001 to date they have been using Condom. Molly says, "I can show you my results." I am HIV negative.

At that time when Obakeng was stabilising, Thabo, who had began to see change in Obakeng health started to become very ill. Molly advised him to get tested, which he eventually did as Molly was more than willing to support him even if he were positive. He tested positive and he accepted his status. Molly, herself, was negative. Molly, and her four children agreed to get tested for HIV and they do a repeat HIV test after every three months.

Now Molly is very happy because the children of neighbours, who know that Oba is positive, play with him. Mothers from the villages bring their children to hang out with Oba.



When Molly, took Obakeng to the ART Clinic for check up, the Doctors asked with amazement, "Is this the boy you brought here when he was too sick? We guess he is not the one. Molly says to the Doctors, "call him by his name Obakeng and see if he will answer." Obakeng, a healthy, intelligent, playful child waves them back with joy.

At this time Obakeng, does not know his status for he is 4 years old, but Oba is keen on taking his medicine. Just before the Generation movie sets on in the local Television in South Africa. Obakeng is heard saying, "Its generation time, I want my Medicine now". Molly looks forward to disclosing to Obakeng about his HIV status as he grows up.

Molly is strong committed woman who will do everything in her will power to help Obakeng and others to live a normal life, including her children, to adjust to a situation of living with people with HIV and learn from their experience.

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Story captured during a home visit conversation with Molly (Oba Foster Parent) at her home in Protea Glen, Soweto on 14<sup>th</sup>, March 2010. The visiting Constellation and SACBC AIDS Office team was hosted by Lufuno Care team. Oupa - a youth, 22 years old and a care giver to the family of Molly led us for the home visit.

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"Its Generation time, I have to take my medicine now," Charming Oba asserts.