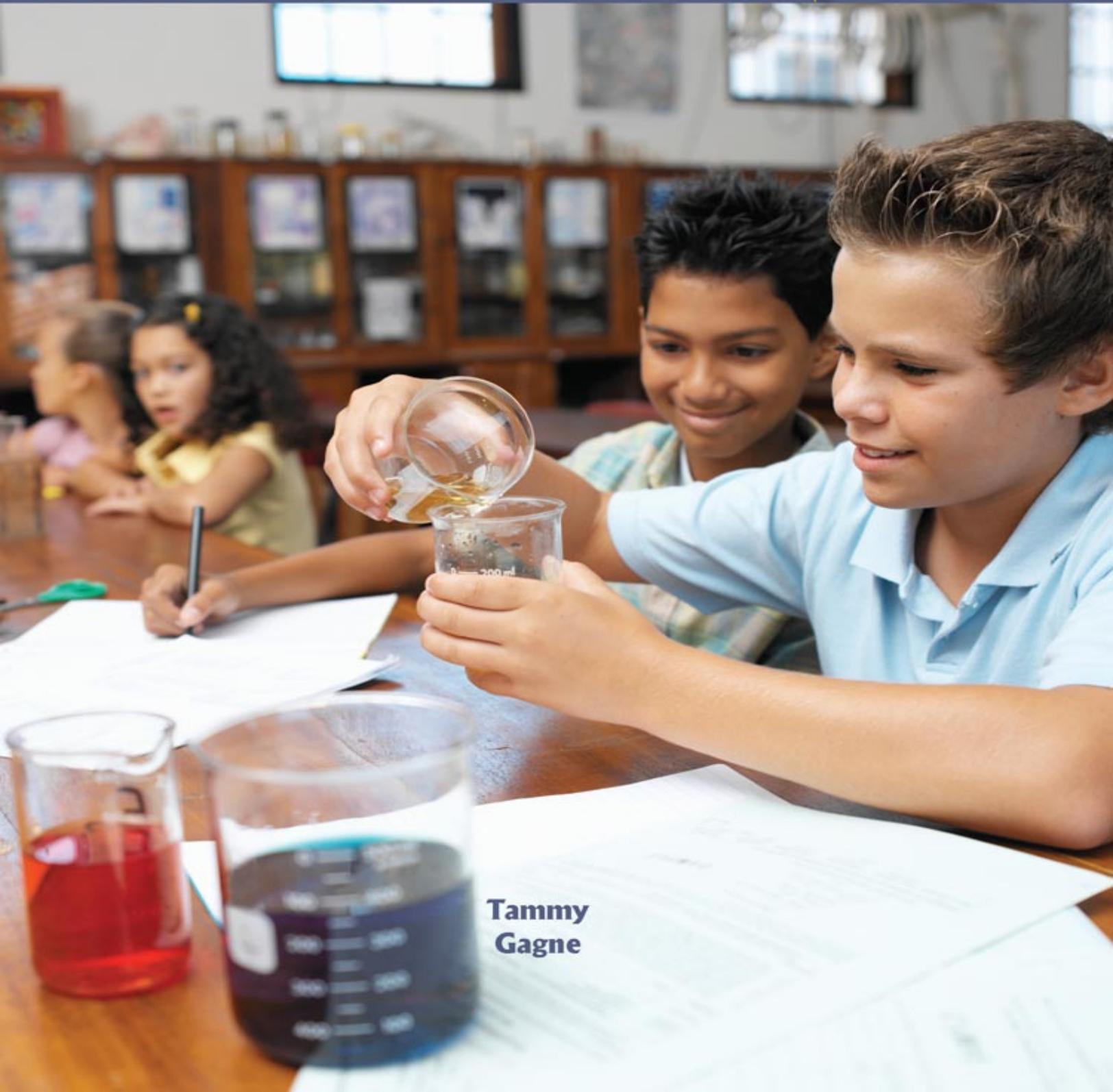


Support for Education



**Tammy
Gagne**



Conquering Disease
The quest to end world hunger
Environmental Protection
Helping Children with Life-Threatening
Medical Issues
Helping Our Veterans
Preserving Human Rights Around the
World
The Quest to End World Hunger
Support for Education

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Introduction

Going to school every day is a fact of life for most children. Many of these kids truly love learning. They look forward to getting up each morning and heading to school. For them school is a place where they learn about new things, spend time with their friends, and take part in extracurricular activities like sports or clubs. Some kids may not love or even like school. Even the ones who do enjoy school might joke about dreading Monday mornings or hoping for snow days in the winter. Whether you enjoy learning or not, one thing is almost certain: As a student, you likely take your education for granted.

Imagine for a moment not having a school. Sure, the idea of not having to go to school might sound like total freedom at first. No homework to do, no tests to study for, no teachers telling you what to do all the time. But what would happen if you didn't have those teachers? Without school you wouldn't be able to learn the things you need to know to survive as you get older. Getting a job to pay for food, housing, and transportation is much more difficult without a high school diploma. If you want to get a high-paying job, you will also need a college degree.

Getting an education isn't an easy task for many children in the world today. In some areas going to school isn't even an option. Poverty, discrimination, and war are just a few of the problems that get in the way of schooling in underdeveloped countries. For children in these areas, school is just a dream. Numerous organizations throughout the world are working to make that dream a reality for as many kids as possible.

CHAPTER 1



The Power of One

Miracle Pierre. At first his name seems almost like a cruel joke. He was born in the mid-1980s in Haiti, the poorest country in the world. About 80 percent of the people in Haiti live on less than \$2 a day.¹ One of seven children, Pierre was among this majority. His father died when Pierre was just a baby, leaving him with an unpromising future. But in 2002, another man would enter his life, turning his bleak reality into an opportunity.

Roger Williams was born in Waukesha County, Wisconsin, decades before young Pierre. At the age of fifty-seven, Williams traveled to Haiti to do humanitarian work with a group called Haiti Allies. One Friday while working in a home for the destitute and dying, he noticed a teenager hanging around. He struck up a conversation with the boy and invited him to join in helping the people at the home.

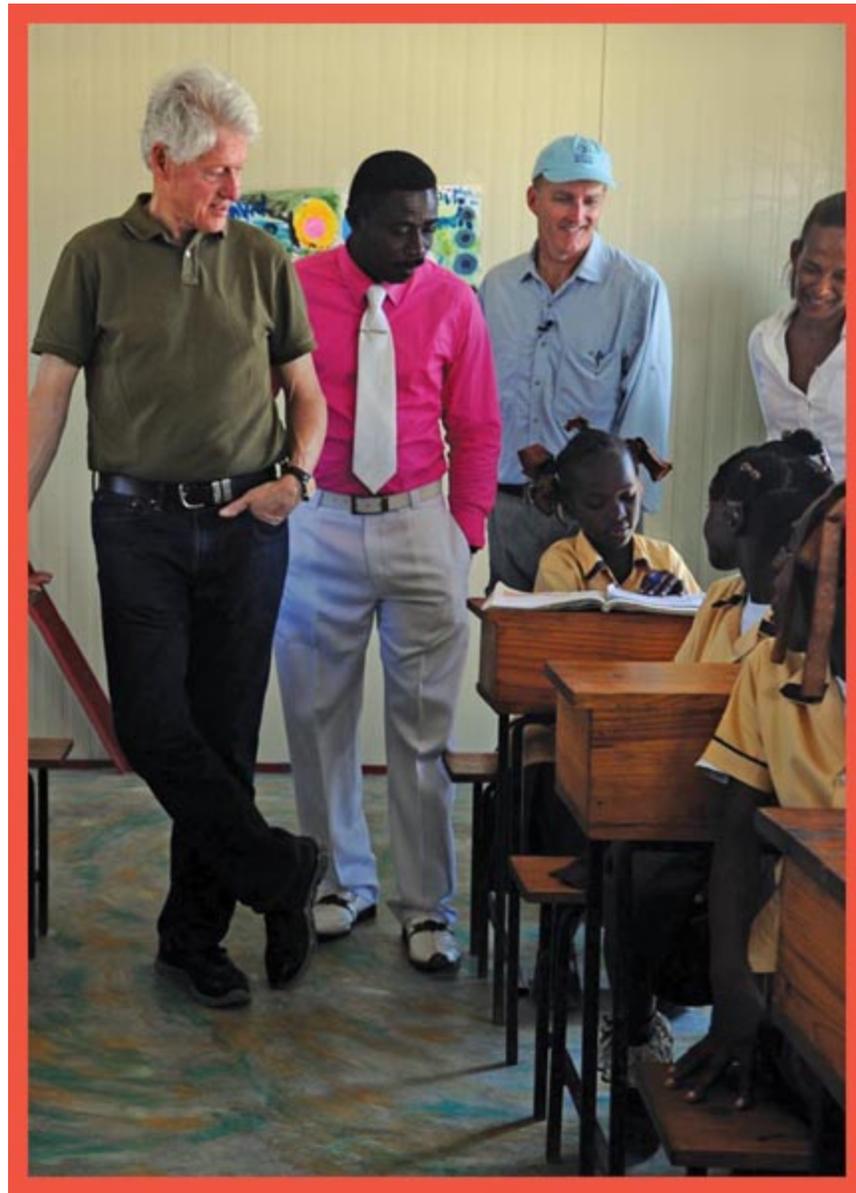
Williams then asked the teen why he wasn't in school. Pierre explained that getting an education in Haiti was a difficult task.

Public schools were not nearly as common in Haiti as they were in other parts of the world. And private schools required something that Pierre did not have—money. He wanted to go to school, but it just wasn't an option for him.

Pierre told his new friend about his difficult life the best he could. But he didn't know much English. His native language was Creole.

Before the end of the day, Pierre asked Williams where he would be on Monday. He shared that he would be helping out at a nearby orphanage. When Williams arrived at the door at the beginning of the new week, he

found Pierre was already there. “I invited him to join me in working with the kids, and he did,” remembers Williams.² He also recalls being very impressed with the young man. Pierre was intelligent and determined. Williams thought that he deserved the chance to go to school.



Since 2010, the Clinton Foundation has raised \$34 million to help the people of Haiti. Parts of the funds are being used to enhance education. Former US President Bill Clinton visited the school Union Des Apotres in Port-au-Prince in 2014 to observe the work that teachers and students are doing there.



 Many people lost their lives in the earthquake that struck Haiti in 2010. In the city of Jacmel, hundreds of people were killed. Those who survived were left to deal with widespread destruction.

He decided to ask Haiti Allies founder Bryan Sirchio to help him make this happen. He knew that the group had a program that matched Haitian students with American sponsors. Williams didn't mention the conversation to Pierre, however. He didn't want to get his young friend's hopes up in case it didn't work out. But like Pierre, Williams was quite determined.

A few weeks later the plan was in place. Pierre received a very important letter from the United States. But neither he nor his mother could read it. They ended up seeking help from Guy Morelus, the coordinator of Haiti Allies in Port-au-Prince. Morelus quickly translated,

explaining that Pierre was going to get to go to school, thanks to Roger Williams and his wife Kristi. The couple would be sponsoring the young man's education.

Williams returned to Haiti in 2009 on another special mission. This time he made the trip specifically to visit his young friend who had just graduated from high school. "It was my way to help celebrate," Williams says.³ Both he and Pierre cried when they saw each other once again.

Pierre didn't stop at getting his high school diploma. He went on to earn a two-year college degree while working part-time at a local bank. In January of 2010, a devastating earthquake rocked the island country. Pierre had been inside the bank just five minutes before the quake began. His timing may have saved his life. Many people who remained inside were killed when the building collapsed a short time later.

Following the quake Sirchio and his Haiti Allies traveled to the country again. When he did, he met up with Pierre who asked him to deliver a gift to Williams. It was a copy of his diploma—along with the original letter that Williams had sent to Haiti so many years earlier. Pierre wanted Williams to have it.

The boy who defied the odds by getting that education he wanted so badly grew up to become a vice principal. He now works at Cite Soleil Community Elementary School in Port-au-Prince, the school where his dream of an education became a reality. Perhaps Miracle was a fitting first name for him after all.

Sometimes just one person can make a huge difference in the life of another. For Miracle Pierre that person was Roger Williams. For numerous children in Cambodia, it was an American named Jamie Amelio. Just a year after Williams made his first trip to Haiti, Amelio traveled to Cambodia. While she was touring the sites, a little girl approached her. "She asked me for a dollar," Amelio recalls. "I asked what she wanted it for. She said school. I asked her to show me the school."⁴

Amelio was taken aback by what she saw in the classrooms. Up to ten students crowded around each desk. Even worse, there was no teacher. She soon discovered that students were required to pay the teacher, when there was one. Amelio decided then and there that she wanted to help.

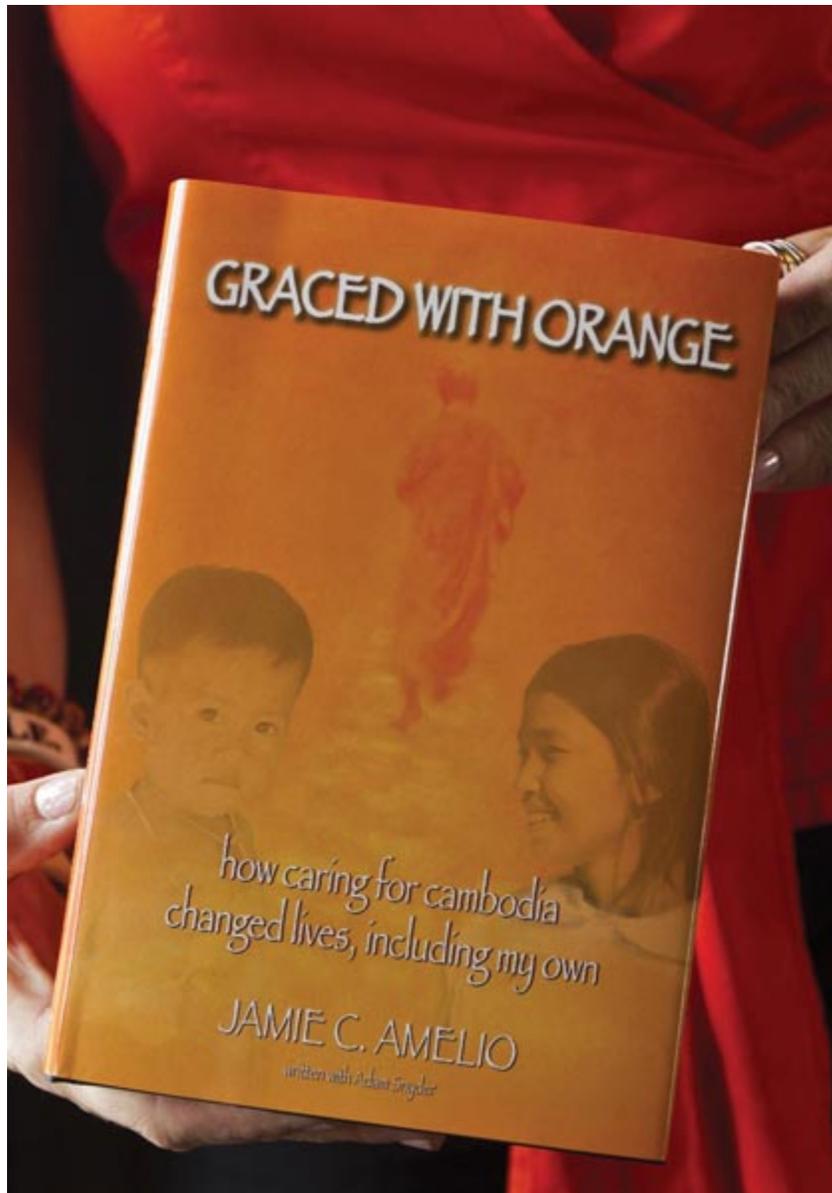
She enlisted the help of her husband who worked for Dell in Singapore. The first thing they did was send much-needed school supplies to the impoverished nation. The Amelios then took on an even greater project:

building a new school. And they followed this project up with the building of more schools. By this point Amelio and the additional volunteers she had assembled had become a real organization named Caring for Cambodia.

All the construction and donations were opening up great possibilities for the children of Cambodia. But Amelio and her crew soon realized that the kids weren't the only ones in need of an education. If teachers were going to instruct children in these new schools, they had to be trained properly. Caring for Cambodia filled this need by adding a training system for people interested in working as teachers. By the time they had finished all the building and training, the organization had created a network of twenty-three schools.

The Cambodian government has since adopted many of the standards that Amelio set with her first school. Ung Savy is the superintendent and on-the-ground director for Caring for Cambodia. When he and Amelio first met, he taught English in the local schools. At first he was a little leery of this stranger who handed him a check for \$2,000 to put towards creating a new school.

"I didn't even know it was a check," he admits. "I'd heard of checks, but never seen one." Savy soon learned that trusting Amelio was a smart move. Her vision turned into something amazing for Cambodian children. "It really has affected education here," he states. "Our schools are the models in the area. Every year, nearly one thousand education officers—like teachers, principals, administrators . . . visit our schools to find out what we are doing."⁵



🌍 Sometimes it just takes one person to make a big difference. In 2003, Jamie Amelio traveled from Texas to Cambodia, where she discovered a great need for educational resources. She created a program to help Cambodian students, and in 2013, her story was published in a book she called *Graced with Orange*.



 The Documentation Center of Cambodia has provided 175,000 history books to children in Cambodia. Here, a student at a school in the Kandal province reads a book about Democratic Kampuchea, the name by which the country was known between 1976 and 1979.

Savy is grateful for all the work that Caring for Cambodia has done. And he credits Amelio with the determination that made it happen. “I had never met people like her in my life,” he shares. “Many people in Cambodia spent so much time to talk—hours and hours—but never help. I ask for their help, so a lot of them promise to help, but never come back. I had no idea she was so persistent.”⁶

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