Dear Holt Family,

I call you this, a member of the “Holt family,” because that’s exactly what you are. The Holt family is made up of many different people—from adoptive families and adoptees to child sponsors and donors to Holt staff and partner organizations to the hundreds of thousands of children and families in Holt’s global programs. We are diverse, intergenerational, multicultural, speak different languages and live all around the world. But we’re all united by a singular pursuit: a world where every child has a safe and loving home. This work is so personal, so intimate, so heartfelt and meaningful—that it really does bring us together as family.

This concept of the Holt family has only gotten stronger for me over this past year. In difficult times like these, we often come closer together and depend on one another like a family. And this was certainly true in 2021.

This past year, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to devastate the lives of children and families as they experienced sickness, job losses, school closures, economic inflation, extreme poverty—and in some cases, the tragic loss of loved ones. Hundreds of children in our adoption programs waited in orphanages, unable to unite with their adoptive families because of rolling travel restrictions.

But in this darkness, the light of hope shone even brighter.

In response to the ongoing COVID crisis, we came together—Holt donors, staff and partners—to provide life-changing and lifesaving help to children and families in greatest need. In the spring, when a deadly second wave of COVID hit India, we delivered emergency food and medicine to children and families. Together, we made sure children could return to school despite increased roadblocks to their education, including higher rates of child marriage. And in many countries, we overcame COVID-related obstacles to help 274 children join adoptive families via international or in-country adoption.

While meeting emergency needs, we also achieved new heights in our mission of ensuring a stable, loving home for every child. In June, we launched a new international adoption program in South Africa. In Cambodia, we worked together with local partners to create family-based care solutions for children living in orphanages—helping them reunite with their families, stay in loving foster families, or for the first time, formally join families through domestic adoption. Also for the first time in 2021, we calculated how many total people are reached when one child receives direct services through our programs around the world. This led us to an incredible milestone—reaching over one million children, family members and other individuals through Holt programs and services in the U.S. and around the world.

This year, we also saw great advancements in technology as an organization. We launched a new user-friendly service center for Holt sponsors to view reports and updates about their sponsored child, and even communicate with them digitally. And thanks to a generous grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, we began work on a new child information system that will ultimately provide a more efficient and effective system for Holt staff to gather information in the field, safeguard sensitive information about orphaned and vulnerable children, and strengthen our ability to report on the global impact of our programs.

As I reflect on 2021, I am astounded by the resolve, determination, compassion and strength of our Holt family. I thank God for you and the part you played in serving children and families this year. When crisis hits, it’s imperative that each person does their part to help make it through. And together, we did that and so much more.

For the Children,
Phillip Littleton
President & CEO
Child Sponsor | Adoptive Father
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW
October 2020 - September 2021
An online version of our audit report is available at holtinternational.org/annualreport.

SOURCES OF SUPPORT (2021)
- Sponsorship Contributions (50%)
- Other Contributions & Grants (21%)
- Adoption Fees (17%)
- Payroll Protection Loan Forgiveness (6%)
- Investment Income and Other (6%)

EXPENSES (2021)
- Programs & Services (73%)
- Fundraising (20%)
- Management & General (7%)

Sources of Support
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>2021</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sponsorship Contributions</td>
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<td>Other Contributions and Grants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Payroll Protection Loan Forgiveness</td>
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<td>Adoption Fees</td>
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<td>Other Fees</td>
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<td>Investment Income and Other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL SUPPORT</strong></td>
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Expenses
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<tr>
<td>Programs &amp; Services</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td>$5,982,067</td>
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<td>Management &amp; General</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong></td>
<td><strong>$28,996,197</strong></td>
<td><strong>$29,486,614</strong></td>
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</table>

Change in Net Assets
- $3,587,723 ($606,458)

Net Assets
- End of Year: $18,868,166
- Beginning of Year: $15,280,442

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
For the year ending September 30, 2021

- 30,489 children received support to stay in their birth families
- 3,529 children received care in foster families, group homes or care centers
- 15,196 preschool to college students received educational support
- 274 children joined adoptive families through international or in-country adoption
- 32,645 children received critically needed medical care
- 48,505 children received nutritional support

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
For the year ending September 30, 2021

- Total Assets: $24,773,159
- Total Liabilities: $23,841,393
- Net Assets: $5,904,993

Board of Directors
Margaret Fitch-Hauser • Steve Banta • Becca Brandt • Yolaine Dauphin • Dan Dietrich • Tom Feely • Donna Gizbert
Kim Lee • Zoe Thompson McDaniel • Cheryl Myers • Derek Parker • Susan M.W. Tahir • Linda Voelsch
In 2021, Holt supporters helped provide direct care and services to 322,373 children and reached 1,036,117 children, family members and other individuals through Holt’s programs and services in the U.S. and around the world.

Colombia
Our in-country partner, FANA, transitioned back to in-person programs in 2021. With the support of Holt donors, 160 children returned to in-person classes, 50 continued to attend online classes, and 210 children received therapies to help them thrive. This past year, 150 families also participated in FANA’s center for parenting education where they attended workshops on topics such as nutrition, health and nonviolent resolution — a critical issue during a time when home life has become increasingly stressful for already struggling families.

Haiti
On August 14, 2021, a massive 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck the southern coast of Haiti. With emergency funding from Holt donors, we responded immediately with hygiene kits, clean water and nourishing meals for 62 children in our partner orphanage and 106 families in the affected community. Our staff in Haiti also distributed COVID-19 prevention kits of masks, soap, handwashing buckets and sanitizer to five schools in the earthquake-affected area, serving up to 1,462 children.

Uganda
Schools in Uganda remained closed in 2021, but with your support, Holt Uganda invested in a home learning program so children wouldn’t fall behind. Through the program, children received educational materials and supplies, and teachers made home visits to check on students’ progress and empower parents with teaching skills. All the children enrolled in the program successfully passed their grade levels! Your gifts also provided emergency COVID-19 relief packages to each family in the program with nutritious food and hygienic supplies, and supported families through trainings on positive parenting, child protection and COVID-19 safety.

Mongolia
In 2021, Holt Mongolia reached a new milestone, serving 2,600 children in need with the support of Holt donors. This year, Holt also expanded our services beyond Ulaanbaatar — delivering much-needed food and school supplies to children living in rural communities, as well as essential medicines for children with special needs that cannot be found in remote areas of Mongolia. More than 300 newly published books were also donated to the library of a secondary school with 1,177 students in one rural district of Mongolia.

Thailand
In 2021, Holt stepped up efforts to provide basic necessities such as food, milk and crop seeds for families in need. With donor support, Holt’s partner, HSF, distributed emergency first-aid kits containing medicines, a thermometer and an oximeter, and a survival bag complete with food and necessities for 950 COVID-infected patients and their families. HSF also enrolled an additional 750 babies into their nutrition program, providing help to new parents financially impacted by COVID-19.

Vietnam
Despite many obstacles created by the pandemic, donors helped 1,308 children at risk of separation to remain in the loving care of their families by providing everything from nutritional support to early childhood care and economic assistance. This past year, 11 children reunited with their birth families and nine joined adoptive families internationally. Holt Vietnam also expanded services to a new site in Vietnam — Yen Bai, a mountainous province in the North where the majority of the population belongs to ethnic groups.
FAMILY STRENGTHENING

30,489 children received support to stay with their families
Keeping Teen Girls in School in Ethiopia

In rural Ethiopia, girls face many obstacles to an education. They face long dangerous walks to school, the pressure of staying home to do domestic work, the threat of early marriage, and limited to no access to feminine hygiene products—a hurdle that causes girls around the world to regularly stay home from school, and even drop out. But thanks to Holt donors, girls at one high school in rural Ethiopia are finally receiving the extra support they need to learn. The school is in a town called Soda. It’s a place you can’t find on a map, and no other NGOs work there. But at the beginning of the last school year, Holt began providing new textbooks, science lab kits and more for over 1,000 high school students. In a special effort to keep girls in school, Holt also funded an important new initiative: building a menstrual hygiene management resource center for female students. Once complete, this resource center will provide the extra supplies, information and support that girls need to complete high school, and go on to achieve their goals in life.

Preventing Early Marriage in India

The global COVID crisis may set back decades of progress in communities where our partners had significantly reduced the practice of child marriage. But one key factor continues to make a difference in the lives of girls and women—and that’s keeping girls in school. When schools closed due to the pandemic, our partner in Pune, India, BSSK, immediately recognized the risks to children, especially girls. When out of school, girls are already at greater risk of early marriage. With so many families losing jobs and income, the financial pressures of the pandemic have further heightened this risk. But through the generous support of Holt sponsors and donors, our partners had the resources they needed to maintain critical contact with girls and their families. They distributed phones and laptops, which made it possible for children to continue their schoolwork online. BSSK social workers continued to provide counseling, support and advocacy for girls in educational sponsorship. Our partners also provided emergency food and cash transfers to families in crisis—easing their financial stress. Collectively, these efforts helped keep over 2,700 girls in school in India and prevented many child marriages that likely would have moved forward in 2021.

Caring for the Children Left Behind in China

In China, millions of children are growing up without their parents—often “left behind” in rural villages when their parents migrate for work. Most of them live with elderly grandparents who can barely care for them. Some of them are completely alone and are easy targets for child traffickers. “Unfortunately, there are so many children still left behind and they grow up by themselves,” says Jian Chen, Holt’s vice president of China programs. Several years ago, Holt started a program to help care for these children. Holt China social workers trained local government child welfare workers in how to identify children in need, conduct a home visit and connect them with services. They built up a local network of support for each child that includes child welfare workers, teachers and other community advocates. And with the support of Holt donors, they ensured every child was in school, had a safe home environment and had their basic needs met. Today, Holt’s program has grown to serve over 8,000 children, and the government of China plans to partner with Holt to expand this program—reaching as many as 73,000 children in the coming years.
“One of the things that we do is increase the caregiver-to-child ratio so that there is more one-on-one and individualized care and support,” says Sarah. “We try to increase the number of children who are being cared for in foster families and decrease the number of children who are institutionalized, because developmentally it makes a big difference.”

For children waiting to be adopted, travel delays and more complicated processes meant a longer time waiting in orphanages — and more strain placed on orphanage facilities. Thankfully, Holt donors helped address this as well, providing the critical funds needed to buy food, diapers and other basic care items that became more expensive due to inflation.

While orphanages experienced the effects of lockdown and inflation, these same factors took a toll on family units across the world.

Microgrants Stabilize Families

When the pandemic hit Cambodia, Mou and her husband couldn’t return to work and didn’t know how they would support their four children. Things got so bad, they considered placing them in an orphanage.

But through a Holt microgrant, our Cambodia staff was able to help Mou start a small business she could sustain during COVID — selling cakes and noodles in the local market. With this new and reliable income, their family stayed together.

This same story played out time and time again — through families in Vietnam who received sewing machines to work as tailors. Whatever mothers in India who received sewing machines to work as tailors. Whatever concentrations on orphanage facilities. Thankfully, Holt donors helped address this as well, providing the critical funds needed to buy food, diapers and other basic care items that became more expensive due to inflation.

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One of the biggest and most dramatic instabilities Holt faced in 2021 was in the world of international adoption.

International adoption in 2021 was still “exponentially more challenging” than normal, says Sarah. But while the China adoption process remained paused due to travel restrictions, Holt’s 10 other regional programs made pathways for adoptions to move forward.

In Vietnam, our staff coordinated with the Vietnamese and U.S. governments and two other adoption agencies to ensure that all U.S. families arrived, quarantined and departed together in cohorts. While it was a great challenge for all involved, seeing children and families come together against so many odds made it all worth it. This outcome fueled each of Holt’s adoptions programs this year, including in Korea.

Hannah and Paul Lee’s adoption journey included months of delayed travel, one expedited visa, two weeks of quarantine and eight very long days before finally getting to travel home with their son. “It was surreal that we were here, and he was in my arms,” Hannah says about finally meeting Elliott in Korea. “The rest of the process went smoothly… Elliott has adjusted so well.”

In 2021, Holt helped to joyfully unite 143 children with their adoptive families in the U.S.

Responding to Unexpected Pandemic Outcomes

For many children and families in Holt programs, the stresses of the pandemic exacerbated issues they already faced. One issue was a significantly higher rate of domestic violence. As families struggled to feed their children and pay rent, family members were more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol — and more likely to commit acts of violence. As a result, Holt’s violence prevention and support programs for women and children became more important than ever.

In Mongolia, the number of cases reported to the National Center for Domestic Violence rose by 39 percent. One of the women represented by this number is Bolormaa, who arrived at a Holt-supported domestic violence shelter in Mongolia along with her three young children.

At the shelter, Bolormaa and her children received food, clothing and a warm, safe bed — all provided with support from Holt sponsors and donors. In 2021, mothers and their children across Holt’s programs received similar help, and the chance to start again in safety.

The True Champions

Around the world in 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically increased the needs of children and families. While the task at times felt insurmountable, the generous and tireless response of Holt supporters, staff and partners made all the difference.

“They were the true champions last year,” says Sarah. “Their dedication, hard work and personal sacrifice allowed our programs to adjust to each new circumstance that arose.”

Children grew healthier and stronger as they continued school in class or at home, graduated, overcame malnutrition, received health care, found safety, and experienced the love and care of their permanent families.

It is with strength and resolve that we continue into 2022, striving for a better world for children, no matter the obstacles. “We can be an incredibly agile organization,” says Sarah. “And we have seen clearly over the course of the last two years that continuing in this manner will be critical to providing high quality care and support services to children and families in need.”
ORPHANED + VULNERABLE CHILDREN

3,529 children received care in foster families, group homes or care centers
Creating a New Model of Care for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children in Cambodia

Five years ago, Holt received a generous grant from the GHR Foundation to help develop more nurturing care alternatives for the thousands of children living in Cambodia’s institutional care centers. With additional funding from USAID through Save the Children and the European Union, Holt has in the years since worked alongside the Cambodian government to develop three alternative care models — kinship care, foster care and, for the first time, a formal, ethical system of domestic adoption. Kinship care placements began in 2019. In 2020, the first Holt-trained foster families began caring for children. And in March 2021, the first child in Cambodia joined her adoptive family via a new process of domestic adoption. With support from USAID, Save the Children and the GHR Foundation, Holt is now working to further promote kinship care and domestic adoption in Cambodia — helping more children reunite with their families or join adoptive families in their country of birth.

First Child Joins a Family Via Domestic Adoption

Early in the COVID pandemic, a baby girl was born in a hospital in Cambodia. She was small, weighing just over 5 pounds, but her eyes were shining with light. A bright new life had just begun. For her mom, however, this was not a day of celebration. Holt social workers provided options counseling for the woman — and offered support and resources should she choose to parent her baby. But she ultimately chose to relinquish her child. Thankfully, a newly-trained Holt foster family was prepared to take this girl, Chivy, into their care. While Chivy grew healthier and stronger in the care of her foster family, Holt Cambodia staff began exploring a more permanent long-term plan for her. For the first time, they began to seek a loving adoptive family for a child in their care.

Historically, Cambodian families have adopted children — but never via a formal process. To ensure safe and ethical domestic placements, Cambodia needed to develop a formal, legal process for vetting prospective families. They needed a process to thoroughly explore whether a child could be reunited with their birth family first. And they needed a process for post-placement visits. Over several years working alongside the Cambodian government, Holt’s Cambodia team helped build out these processes step by step. And in March 2021, Chivy became the first child to join an adoptive family via this new domestic adoption process. Today, she is thriving in the loving care of her family.

Caring for Children in the Time of COVID

In 2021, almost all Holt-supported orphanages functioned at capacity, unable to take in any more children due to staffing shortages and COVID-19 lockdowns. High rates of inflation made purchasing even basic food and supplies more difficult. But through it all, Holt supporters helped our partner orphanages continue to provide children with a high standard of care. As a staff member at one orphanage in the Philippines shared, “Amidst the crisis, we never ran out of diapers, milk, food and vitamins for the children. This is thanks to Holt.” But Holt donors provided more than tangible help. “It’s a lot about training and best practices and increasing the number of caregivers that are available to support children,” says Sarah Halfman, Holt’s senior executive of international programs. Last year, Holt helped train existing and newly recruited orphanage caregivers in nutrition, feeding, childcare and more — bringing stable, consistent and high-quality care to the children in their facilities during this uncertain time.
The Power of Nutrition

Analyn’s world was small. About four ceiling tiles to be exact. Ceiling tiles that she stared at for hours every day from her crib at an orphanage in the Philippines.

Analyn has cerebral palsy and first came to the orphanage at 10 months old. Although she received physical therapy, her regular caregivers had little experience working with children with cerebral palsy — especially when it came to feeding her. Thinking it was the easiest way for Analyn to eat, her caregivers fed her while she was lying down. But this caused her to choke and get fluid into her lungs, which can lead to pneumonia. Not to mention the constant choking was scary for Analyn.

Four years ago, Holt’s child nutrition program (CNP) team traveled to the Philippines to train caregivers at Analyn’s care center. Her caregivers learned that upright is the best feeding position for children with cerebral palsy. They learned how to spoon feed her and support her jaw to aid in swallowing. With Holt’s training resources, the orphanage nurse and cook also created a high-protein, high-calorie diet for Analyn with modified food textures to meet her needs.

Through these huge changes in diet and feeding, Analyn’s world began to change. Instead of lying down all day, she began to spend more of her day upright, engaging with the world around her.

When Holt’s nutrition team visited Analyn’s orphanage again two years later, they were astounded by the change they saw in Analyn. “We saw a happy girl who played with her friends, enjoyed meals,” says Emily DeLacey, Holt’s director of nutrition and health services. “Additionally, we could see that she is now on a stable growth trajectory and is no longer at risk of malnutrition. This is the impact on children’s lives has been nothing short of transformational. Initial nutrition screenings showed 85% of children at CNP sites to be experiencing malnutrition. But after one year in the program, malnutrition rates reduced among all children — with 41% no longer experiencing feeding difficulties and 20% of children no longer experiencing any malnutrition at all. Through CNP trainings, caregivers have also become empowered to make smart nutrition and feeding decisions — and advocate — for the children in their care.

In 2021, Holt’s nutrition team received an update on Analyn that moved Emily to tears. A gastroenterologist had visited her care center and suggested that Analyn be put on a feeding tube — a drastic measure that would severely limit Analyn’s interaction with other children, increase her risk of infection, and likely shrink her world back to the space of a few ceiling tiles. But Analyn’s caregivers knew they could do better by Analyn.

“They said, ‘No, we are not going to do that. If we put a tube in her, she can’t go to therapy. She can’t leave the site. We can’t have her playing with other children,’” Emily says. “She’ll never receive the essential development that eating provides children. … And because of the child nutrition program, we learned how to feed her safely. She’s healthy. She’s not aspirating. And she’s doing really well. We are going to say no.”

Today, Analyn is leading a healthier, happier life — all because of Holt’s child nutrition programs, the generosity of donors, and the love of her caregivers. As Emily says, “That whole little girl’s life is going to be different because she will be able to fully participate in all the activities children need to grow and develop to their full potential.”

A Malnutrition Crisis Caused by COVID-19

Holt’s child nutrition program is a key part of Holt’s efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of children around the world, and as Analyst’s story shows, it continues to impact the lives of children years after initial intervention. Every year, Holt supporters also make it possible to provide direct nutritional support to children and families through everything from regular school meals and emergency food assistance to livestock and seedlings that empower families to produce their own food. In 2021, a total of 46,501 children received nutritional support through Holt programs. For the first time, Holt also surpassed one million meals provided to children and families, including emergency food delivered due to COVID-19.

This past year, the global COVID-19 crisis continued to endanger children and families in vulnerable communities — and for many, the most pressing issue was food. “Holt’s families are definitely having a hard time of it,” Emily says. “We’re seeing steep declines in household incomes. Nutritious food is not available or affordable. Even month-long COVID restrictions have caused a dramatic number of children to become malnourished.”

In Ethiopia especially, pandemic-caused inflation led to a steep increase in hunger and malnutrition. As this crisis emerged in April 2021, Holt began emergency nutrition assessments and interventions across rural Ethiopia. Out of the more than 13,000 children assessed, over 5,790 of them were found to be acutely malnourished.

“Right away, Holt’s community health workers delivered emergency nutrition packets high in calories, fat, electrolytes and micronutrients, or referred children to our hospital,” Emily says. “Families received regular follow-up visits to learn more about nutrition, and Holt teams provided ongoing support until the children’s nutrition status improved.”

Nutrition and Health Services Growth in 2021

Around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic placed a tremendous strain on Holt teams as they strived to meet the needs of children and families. But thanks to generous donors, Holt’s nutrition and health services not only met this urgent need — they also continued to grow in 2021. Adapting to COVID restrictions, Holt’s teams trained another 4,692 caregivers enabling them to provide over 124,000 health screenings to children living in families, foster homes and care centers. In countries such as Haiti and Ethiopia, Holt created new clean water access stations to ensure children have safe water to drink and wash their hands. And in rural Uganda, the impact of Child Health Days campaigns more than doubled from the previous year.

“We started with a plan in 2018 to serve about 1,000 children,” Emily says of the campaigns to address nutritional deficiencies among children in hard-to-reach areas. “Last year, we provided essential vitamins and parasite treatment for over 49,000 children and pregnant women in Uganda.”

Whether through emergency food, clean water, parasite treatment, health screenings or child nutrition program trainings that empower caregivers to properly feed the children in their care, Holt’s nutrition and health services made an incredible impact in the lives of children and families in 2021.
ADOPTION + POST ADOPTION

95% of children adopted internationally had special needs, were older than 5 or part of a sibling group.
Dear Contributing Donors,

We want to thank you for contributing to our adoption through generous donations to Holt. As you are aware, there are many barriers to overcome during the adoption process, and the financial burden is one of the more significant. However, your generosity has helped to lessen that burden and make it possible to keep our sibling group of three children together. … We have been spending our time bonding and learning to be a family of five. Each day has its challenges, but our children are resilient. They are also so sweet and so much fun! We have been homeschooling, playing outside on our play set, building forts, drawing, and meeting a few friends and family. … Additionally, our children are receiving the emotional, medical and spiritual support and care they need and deserve. All of this has only been possible because of the support we have received from family, friends, Holt staff and donors like you. We are grateful for your willingness to support our family and other families like ours. We hope you are able to continue to support other families and that you receive encouragement knowing that you have played such a vital role in the lives of these children.

Sincerely,

The Wilson Family

With Holt Support, Thai Adoptee Reunites With Her Birth Mother

During her senior year of college, Holt adoptee Taylor B. decided to take a leap of faith and begin the birth search process. She reached out to Holt’s post-adoption team, who connected her with Holt’s partner in Thailand, Holt Sahathai Foundation, and provided support throughout the process. After some online searching, Taylor unexpectedly connected with her birth mother over Facebook, setting a time to meet during Taylor’s upcoming family trip to Thailand. “At that moment in time, everything stood still. Twenty years of my life came full circle. I found my missing puzzle piece. . . . For years, I had wondered how my mother could say goodbye to her child. But at that moment, I realized that my birth mother made the ultimate sacrifice to give me a chance to live the life she always dreamed I would have…” Taylor said about the experience. “She never gave up on me; she had hope for the both of us when I felt like there was no hope at all.”

Holt awarded $146,100 in adoption grants to help 36 children join families

Holt is now one of three U.S. adoption agencies approved to place children from South Africa with eligible families in the U.S.. Holt’s South Africa team is working in partnership with well-respected, Cape Town-based child protection and adoption agency Wandisa, and began accepting applications from prospective families in May 2021. “We are very excited about this opportunity to participate in home-finding for children from South Africa,” says Thoa Bui, Holt’s vice president of international programs. “We are particularly passionate about being able to find families for children with special needs and older children.” In the coming years, Holt also plans to launch a family strengthening program in South Africa to help parents facing poverty, homelessness and instability receive the tools and resources they need to successfully parent their children — preventing separation and abandonment, and ensuring children can grow and thrive in the loving care of their birth families.
Li received heart surgery in April 2021.

Without medical intervention, Li’s condition grew progressively worse. He couldn’t run or play with other kids. His aunt couldn’t afford such an expensive operation.

Just after Valentine’s Day last year, the phone rang inside the home of 10-year-old Li and his aunt in rural China. It was a call they never thought they’d receive.

Li was just a year old when his parents divorced and left him to be raised by his aunt. Li’s aunt earned very little income and struggled to care for her nephew, but she adored him and was the only constant in his life. When Li began to have chest pains and struggled to keep up with other children at school, his aunt took him to a doctor — who diagnosed him with a life-threatening heart condition.

When Holt’s China team learned about Li, they reached out to our staff in the U.S. They also shared about other children whose lives were at risk simply because their families could not afford their medical costs. Fittingly, on Valentine’s Day, Holt donors came together to fund life-saving heart surgeries and treatments for five children in China — including Li.

When Holt’s China team called his home to share this exciting news, Li could hardly believe it. On the other end of line, Li asked his aunt, “Is it true I can receive a free surgery?”

“Yes,” his aunt answered, “there are many good-hearted people helping us.”

In April 2021, Holt’s China team arranged for Li to travel to a top children’s hospital in Beijing. Here, he received the heart surgery that saved his life.

A Long History of Caring for Children with Special Needs

Since the early 1940s, when Holt’s founders built the Irian Center — a long-term care home for children and adults with disabilities in Korea — caring for children with special needs has been central to the Holt mission and a key part of who we are as an organization. In every country where we work, we care for children who are most vulnerable, most in need and most alone in this world. Of all children, those with disabilities or healthcare needs are often the most vulnerable and the most alone. With their families unable to care for them, children with special needs are far more likely to end up in orphanages — and are far less likely to join families through adoption. Other children — like Li — live in poverty with their families, but fail to receive the costly medical care and therapies they need to thrive, and in some cases, even survive to adulthood.

Every year, Holt’s generous sponsors and donors make it possible to provide truly life-changing care and support to thousands of vulnerable children with special needs around the world. To a 12-year-old boy, born deaf in Ethiopia, who never learned how to communicate with his family because no one ever taught him sign language.

To a 9-year-old girl with cerebral palsy, growing up in an orphanage in the Philippines, who chokes on her food because her caregivers don’t know how to feed her.

To a boy with Down syndrome who stays behind while his siblings go to school in Vietnam, or a girl with HIV in China whose family isolates her for fear of a disease they don’t understand.

To a boy with a serious heart condition whose aunt could not afford the cost of surgery to save his life.

Every one of these children is now receiving the care and support they need to reach their potential.

In 2021, Holt’s China team arranged for Li to travel to a top children’s hospital in Beijing. Here, he received the heart surgery that saved his life. Every one of these children could not afford the cost of surgery to save their lives. Holt’s China team arranged for Li to travel to a top children’s hospital in Beijing. Here, he received the heart surgery that saved his life.

In every area, advocating and caring for children with special needs is a cornerstone of Holt’s work — and one that will continue to grow because of the generosity of Holt sponsors and donors.

Today, Li is back home with his aunt in China. His heart surgery was successful, and he is so grateful to the Holt supporters who helped save his life.

Caring for Children with Special Needs

In 2021, Holt donors helped provide life-changing care and support to thousands of children with special needs — and advanced new initiatives to help more children thrive.

A Long History of Caring for Children with Special Needs

Since the early 1940s, when Holt’s founders built the Irian Center — a long-term care home for children and adults with disabilities in Korea — caring for children with special needs has been central to the Holt mission and a key part of who we are as an organization. In every country where we work, we care for children who are most vulnerable, most in need and most alone in this world. Of all children, those with disabilities or healthcare needs are often the most vulnerable and the most alone. With their families unable to care for them, children with special needs are far more likely to end up in orphanages — and are far less likely to join families through adoption. Other children — like Li — live in poverty with their families, but fail to receive the costly medical care and therapies they need to thrive, and in some cases, even survive to adulthood.

Every year, Holt’s generous sponsors and donors make it possible to provide truly life-changing care and support to thousands of vulnerable children with special needs around the world.

Just after Valentine’s Day last year, the phone rang inside the home of 10-year-old Li and his aunt in rural China. It was a call they never thought they’d receive.

Li was just a year old when his parents divorced and left him to be raised by his aunt. Li’s aunt earned very little income and struggled to care for her nephew, but she adored him and was the only constant in his life. When Li began to have chest pains and struggled to keep up with other children at school, his aunt took him to a doctor — who diagnosed him with a life-threatening heart condition. Li urgently needed surgery, but his aunt couldn’t afford such an expensive operation.

Without medical intervention, Li’s condition grew progressively worse. He couldn’t run or play with other kids. His chest pains grew more frequent — often keeping him home from school. Time and time again, his heart condition held him back.

When Holt’s China team learned about Li, they reached out to our staff in the U.S. They also shared about other children whose lives were at risk simply because their families could not afford their medical costs. Fittingly, on Valentine’s Day, Holt donors came together to fund life-saving heart surgeries and treatments for five children in China — including Li.

When Holt’s China team called his home to share this exciting news, Li could hardly believe it. On the other end of line, Li asked his aunt, “Is it true I can receive a free surgery?”

“Yes,” his aunt answered, “there are many good-hearted people helping us.”

In April 2021, Holt’s China team arranged for Li to travel to a top children’s hospital in Beijing. Here, he received the heart surgery that saved his life.

Every year, Holt’s generous sponsors and donors make it possible to provide truly life-changing care and support to thousands of vulnerable children with special needs around the world.

Around the world in 2021, Holt donors also made it possible to grow and expand programs for children with special needs. In Mongolia, Holt helped fund a new special needs service center that now serves nearly 1,000 children and their families. Here, social workers and medical staff evaluate the needs of individual children and make recommendations for medical treatments, therapies or specialized care — as well as guidance on applying for government assistance. In the coming years, Holt also plans to hold child nutrition program trainings at this center.

In Vietnam, Holt worked in partnership with the Khanh Foundation Center to provide home-based services for children with special needs. Holt supporters helped fund the pilot project, in which special education teachers and therapists develop an individualized curriculum for each child depending on their physical and intellectual needs and then teach their parents how to help their child develop important life skills.

And in Ethiopia, Holt donors helped make it possible for 110 family members of children with hearing impairments to attend weekly sign language trainings. In a region with alarmingly high rates of hearing impairment and deafness among youth, this service aims to strengthen communication between children and their parents.

Through these and other efforts in 2021, Holt supporters and teams around the world met new milestones in helping children with special needs thrive in the care of their families.

This past year, Holt also launched new initiatives to help children with special needs join loving families through adoption.

Through Holt’s Families Not Finances campaign, donors helped fund adoption grants up to $50,000 to help find families for children on Holt’s waiting child photolisting. Some of these children have disabilities or healthcare needs while others are simply older in age or part of a sibling group.

In 2021, Holt awarded over $446,000 in adoption grants to help 36 children join their adoptive families — including five $10,000 grants and 31 Special Needs Adoption grants in smaller amounts. Of the 143 children who joined their adoptive families this past year, 63 had moderate to major special needs and 59 were older than age 5. But in truth, almost every child who joins a family through international adoption today has at least some special needs — whether physical conditions they were born with, or emotional needs they developed from spending years of their life in institutional care.

In every area, advocating and caring for children with special needs is a cornerstone of Holt’s work — and one that will continue to grow because of the generosity of Holt sponsors and donors.

Today, Li is back home with his aunt in China. His heart surgery was successful, and he is so grateful to the Holt supporters who helped save his life.

For this amazing gift, he and his aunt thank “the good-hearted people.”
143 children joined adoptive families internationally

Adoptees Elshaday (second from left), Trek (far right) and Ruby (center) pose with their five cousins. Born in Ethiopia, Trek and Elshaday joined the Gibler family in 2009 and 2012. Ruby was born in Korea and joined her adoptive family in 2015.

131 children joined families through in-country adoption, including the U.S.
A girl plays outside at a Holt donor-supported daycare for children of migrant families in India — a rare opportunity for children living in crowded slum neighborhoods.