

Changing
the world
one
child
at a time

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MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

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JAMBO

A Message from the President



Foundation
President
Sherri Mills

Welcome back to "Makena Musings." You haven't received a newsletter from the Makena Children's Foundation (MCF) in quite a while. Or, maybe, this is your first issue. From now on, look for three issues a year.

We have two new volunteer editors who have agreed to coordinate and write our newsletter. Former newsletter editor, Tina Horton, will continue to do the layout. Our new editors are Anne Batzer and Mary Jo Baich. Sisters-in-law with long-term interest in Kenya and its people, they will bring you more information on this country, its resources and challenges. Thank you, Tina, Anne and Mary Jo.

Peter Muigai, Foundation vice-president and our representative in Kenya, became a diabetic about a year ago and has had a very difficult time controlling his disease. Peter had lost more than 60 pounds by early summer and was experiencing circulation problems in his feet and legs. About two months ago, after trying several oral diabetes medications he began a regimen of two insulin injections a day. He feels much better now, is able to work on his farm and is considering guiding some short safaris in time. Peter and his wife, Jane, have been encouraged and touched by your overwhelming support shown to them in so many ways.

Early in November, five Makena 8th graders sat for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education exam. How they score on the test will determine these children's future. Although 700,000 children will sit for the exam, there are only 200,000 secondary seats to be filled. Our children have worked very hard for the last year to prepare for the test. We believe they will do well, and receive invitations to high-ranking secondary schools. Watch for the spring newsletter for an update on our students' rankings in the National exam.

(Continued inside, page 2)

Watching Daniel Grow

By Mary Jo Baich

This October when I walked into the home of the child we sponsor through the Makena Foundation, I was so touched to see the photo of my husband and myself that I had sent him so many years ago still lovingly attached to the wall of this home.

My husband, Ed and I began our friendship with Daniel Kimani in 1996 as he was about to begin nursery school. We are separated by great distances, age, race and cultures, but with his family and through the networking of Peter Muigai, we were brought together for the common purpose of having him be a part of the Makena Children's Foundation. Daniel became the second child brought into the program after Sherri Mill's and Bert Brosowsky's child, Hannah Wanja.



Daniel, one of 6 children, has 2 older brothers and 3 older sisters who were orphaned after their single mother died from breast cancer. Fortunately Daniel was invited to be a part of the family of his older brother, Peter Jomo, who was 21 at the time of this family's crisis. It was Jomo's desire to keep this large family together and fed, by getting them to work together in their shamba (garden). Sharing in this goal was his loving and energetic wife, Terry. Their home provides Daniel a place to live during the month long quarterly holidays when he is not attending school.

(Continued inside, page 2)

Want to change the world? Educate girls!

By Anne Batzer



One look at Rachel Njeri's beautiful, trusting eyes, and the heart immediately has its own reasons for offering this young girl an education. But beyond the simple truth of our first loving response, United Nations' studies reveal many other spectacular outcomes of educating the girls growing up in developing countries:

♀ The basic indices of health improve for everyone in the village. The population explosion diminishes because women marry later and have fewer children. There's a decrease in both infant and maternal mortality rates because of better health practices and nutrition.

♀ Girls' education may be the single most effective weapon in the prevention of HIV/AIDS because they have an understanding of the disease and take action to prevent it.

"There can be no significant or sustainable transformations in societies---and no significant or lasting reduction in global poverty---until girls receive the quality basic education they need and that is their fundamental right."

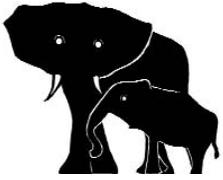
Carol Bellamy, UNICEF Executive Director

♀ In a village, for every year of the girls' schooling, wages for women and men increase by 10%. Educated mothers send their children to school, breaking the cycle of inter-generational poverty.

♀ Girls in school are less vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse. They demonstrate understanding of peace, social justice and environmental issues. In general, countries with higher primary enrollment and smaller school gaps between boys and girls are more democratic.

MAKENA Musings

FALL 2004



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If you'd like to sponsor or help sponsor a Makena student, please complete the form on the inside of this newsletter and send your donation TODAY to the Foundation at the address above! Your gift will be greatly appreciated!

Happy Holidays!

Across the United States, starry-eyed children we know have already made out their Christmas and Chanukah wish lists and are waiting with great anticipation for December when many of those wishes will be granted.

They're asking for Robosapien Robot (\$100). A 14' Trampoline (\$129). Or maybe a Playstation 2 Console and 3 games (\$260). And don't forget: Lego Harry Potter Hogwarts Castle (\$90), Harry Potter Paperback Boxed Set, (\$50), InteractTV with 3 DVDs (\$85) and Razor E Battery-Powered Electric Scooter (\$350).

The children you see pictured here have wish lists, too. They wish for their tummies to be filled the next day. They wish for rain -- rain that comes at just the right time so their crops won't wither and rain that does not linger and flood the crops.

And, when they allow themselves to really dream, these children wish for an education. A good education that can change their lives and the lives of their families.

This is the season for making wishes come true.

For \$1,200, you can buy all the most sought-after toys listed above.

For \$1,200, you can give the gift of education to one of these three deserving children -- and change a life forever. Your gift will provide room, board, tuition, uniforms and personal items for a year, and food staples for the family at Christmas. Your sponsorship will open the door to independence, responsibility and knowledge.

Maybe you can't pay \$1,200 a year, but you can share the cost with a friend or family member. Maybe your Sunday School class or civic organization would like to accompany one of these precious children on their journey to knowledge. Even smaller gifts are important. Smaller gifts of \$35, \$55 or \$100 from a large number of you will allow us to enroll a child in school this January and have a whole year to find a permanent sponsor.

Won't you please consider this opportunity? I promise you: Giving this opportunity to a child will be the best Christmas or Chanukah gift you've ever given -- or received.

Sincerely,
Sherri Mills
Sherri M. Mills
President

P.S. Please complete the form enclosed with this mailing and send your check TODAY!



Elisabeth



John



Alice

Tough Choice Leads to Memorable Visit and Renewal

By Mary Sherlock

My second trip back to Kenya was to visit my Makena child, Mary Gatuku, and it turned out to be one of the best trips of my life, for reasons I will explain in a moment.

I was surprised that many of the children and the guardians, as well, remembered me from my first trip to Kenya in 2001 when I first met my "binti" (a Swahili word for daughter), Gatuku and became involved in the Makena Children's Foundation. It was good to see them again and to get to know them better.

On Sunday before the scheduled guardian's meeting, I attended church with Peter and Jane and the subject of the reading was about the widow who had helped the prophet Elijah during a severe famine. With only enough oil and flour to prepare the last meal for her son and herself she responded to the request from Elijah to make him a cake first, and with what was left, to then feed themselves. For years after, as Elijah had foretold, the oil and the flour never ran out and, both she and her son, were able to subsist until the famine was over. It was as if the reading was meant just for me and I was greatly encouraged by its message. It took on a deeper meaning later in the week, at the guardian's meeting.

The guardians, over the last few years, have really bonded together and truly want to do what they can to assist their children in this unique educational opportunity. They are thankful for the financial and emotional support that the sponsors of the Makena Children's Foundation are providing. Peter asked me to share my personal story with them to help them understand that while we have so much in the U.S. some of the sponsors have limited financial means.

I am, myself, now living on limited funds, having recently left the corporate world to go back to school to pursue a master's degree in physical therapy. Still, I am committed to supporting Mary Gatuku in her studies, and my family is supportive of both of these objectives.

My small, immediate family, consists of a brother, a sister and her two children, my niece and nephew, who live in Arizona. I traveled there a year ago when my niece was pregnant, to help give a baby shower for her and to give her, during my stay, some sentimental items belonging to the family. I had planned to return for the Christmas holidays last year to see my new great nephew. But looking at the ledger sheet there was only enough money to see either my Makena child, Mary, or to return to see my great nephew. While I had expected to be able to do both and they both were expecting me to come, sadly I had to choose just one trip.

My family supported me in the decision to come to Kenya and see Mary. It was a wonderful and renewing kind of visit for me and I am grateful for my family's support. As I related this story to the guardians, unfortunately a bit tearfully, their reaction was one of overwhelming support, love and gratitude. It was a moment I will remember all my life. It is a great lesson to learn that we can trust God to provide for the future needs of both ourselves and those that we help along the way.



Daniel

(Continued from front)

Daniel began nursery school as a small, shy child. He had large, thoughtful eyes that took in the world around him but did not prompt him to make much conversation about what he saw. Called Kimani by his family and school mates, he is given to wide, full smiles for picture taking. It is a pleasure to have these pictures of him arrive at our home, accompanied by his grades, and to watch him grow despite the miles that separate us.

I have been fortunate to be with Kimani for three visits, two quite brief ones in the beginning of the friendship and, most recently, a three day visit to Elite School with Sherri Mills in October of this year. Of all the children milling around the school yard, I spotted Kimani yards off much to the delight of both of us. I also got to attend, his seventh grade physics class, a lively and enjoyable learning experience. In addition I have been to his home twice to visit with Jomo and Terry and their growing family of four children. We all got quite a chuckle from Kimani when I asked him how many nieces and nephews he now had. He responded, "Too many!" Certainly a response that any, just turned 13 year old, would give at the thought of sharing a bedroom and his belongings with the investigative hands of small children.

At the required October Makena parent/guardian meeting, Terry spoke on behalf of Kimani as her husband, Jomo, is now busy working days for one of the cut flower farms. Terry related to the others gathered that when Daniel's grades took a dip, not only did she and her husband encourage Kimani to do better, but because I was informed, I too, could write a letter of encouragement to him. As is so often the case when raising children, nothing beats a joint and united front. Kimani does his part too in the relationship and faithfully writes to us. Ed and I are impressed that he remembers our grandchildren's names and continues to inquire as to how our lives compare or differ from the place he lives.

Next year is a challenging one for Kimani for November 2005 brings a national test to see which high school he will qualify to attend. Ed and I, his family and the Makena Foundation intend to circle the wagons and give him all the help and nurturing possible to make his intended goal.

President's Message

(Continued from front)

On our recent visit to Nyahururu Elite Schools, Mary Jo Baich and I enjoyed hearing the Form Four students (equivalent to our seniors in high school) prepare themselves for the national secondary test. They cheered, chanted and marched their way across campus to the test site. The scene was repeated as they returned each evening. The students' enthusiasm was contagious.

I'd like to remind you that, during this most special time of the year, you can give holiday gifts to the Foundation in memory or in honor of friends and family. We will notify the person you honor or the family of those you memorialize that you have made a gift in their name.

If you would like to make an important donation that doesn't require a monetary gift, here's a suggestion: Please write to one of our unsponsored children. Share your family's life, and find out about a Kenyan child's life, dreams and hopes. For details, email me at sherri.mills@charter.net, or call me at 205 822-8717.

During my visit to the schools, I received a gift -- my yearly dose of hope from the children. Their hope, like their enthusiasm, is contagious. Often in catastrophic situations in which you and I might find no hope, these children continue to see it -- and reflect it brightly on each precious face.

Happy holidays! Our wish for you is that your New Year will be full of enthusiasm and shining with hope.

AIDS, Education & Our Kids

All of us know of the AIDS problem in Kenya and other African nations. It was recently announced by the Government that the percentage of infected Kenyans is 6.7 percent rather than the 14 percent stated in an earlier survey. (The survey has been recognized as accurate by Great Britain.) AIDS is a heterosexual disease in Kenya. Cultural traditions support the spread of the disease.

Of our 33 Makena children, two have lost both parents to AIDS. Seven others have lost one parent to the disease. The government has mounted an organized war against the disease. Free testing and counseling are available now,

and AIDS educational materials are available everywhere but the most rural parts of Kenya. There are educational billboards and a lot of discussion on the radio, television and in the schools. A new AIDS curriculum has been developed for the new school year. During Prize Giving Day at Elite Junior School, high school students have presented very powerful dramas regarding AIDS.

Behaviors must be changed so that the disease does not continue to orphan children by the millions. Our Makena kids are exposed to lots of AIDS education. Let us pray they remain disease-free.



Life in Maraigushu

By Mary Jo Baich

Almost all of our Makena children come from Maraigushu, a small village located six miles, mostly straight up the upland escarpment from the large and beautiful Lake Naivasha, the highest altitude lake of the Great Rift Valley. Maraigushu is situated at an elevation of 6000 feet, about 50 miles northwest of Nairobi. This village's income comes entirely from the farming of vegetables but it is blessed with a nearly perfect climate because of its proximity to the equator. The rolling tree-studded hills of the village are dotted by small plot farms and the work in the fields is done by hand without benefit of any machinery. This area is famous for its red and white onions, as well as its leeks although many kinds of vegetables are also raised here. The diet of the people is mostly vegetarian, a reflection of what grows outside the kitchen door.

Pyrethrum, a natural insecticide, is a small daisy-like plant. It used to be their main cash crop and was eagerly planted, for it is one that has increasing world market demand as companies that sell insecticides are switching from their chemical dependency to those that have an organic base.

Unfortunately in the year 2000, the National Pyrethrum Board of Kenya poached from the local farmers the pre-paid 2 million Kenya shillings that were due them for their crop, leaving the villagers without any source of income that year -- thus the switch by them to crops that are not controlled by governmental boards.

Even so, most of the farming yield would be considered subsistence farming due to both the smallness of the plots and to the relatively low rainfalls they have received for years. This means that, besides the food grown for personal use and that which is produced for the required seeds needed to plant the next crop, there is seldom enough harvested to take to market. Outside of the village and closer to the city of Naivasha there are larger to-market farms and a booming cut flower industry that is flourishing.

Nearly half of the neighboring city of Naivasha's 200,000 residents and some of the residents from Maraigushu work in the greenhouses that grow these flowers. Sadly the pay per day for this work is \$1.50 US and involves a very long walk for those that live in the village.

The village has about 5,000 residents, no electricity and few wells. Water must be carried great distances for both home and farm use. Drought comes often and varies in intensity, so yearly incomes also fluctuate. There are a few dairy farms, and some villagers have one or two cows and maybe a couple of goats or sheep but these are used more for their milk than to put meat on the table.

The village has three public grammar schools and a high school but these are rated substandard nationally, thus the Makena children travel 60 miles to attend The Elite School in Nyahururu. The children return to the village to live with their remaining parent or guardians on each of their three school breaks.

We visited Mununga, one of the local grammar schools, and we were impressed with the dedication of the teachers and administration to teach despite the overwhelming difficulties that they face. Depending on the subject there are two or three students sharing a book. Desks are constructed with 1" by 8" boards, one board for the desk top and one board for the sitting area and all is held together by a few upright pieces of lumber. This desk sits three students elbow-to-elbow. Class size varies from 50-70 children per teacher.



Enrollment has increased greatly since the new president of Kenya took office, for he abolished both the fees for uniforms and entrance that were impossible for some families to afford. The downside of this is that families that once contributed work at the school to get their children into the system no longer help the faculty out as it is now considered to be the government's job to solve these problems. Due to the distance from Nairobi, and the smallness of the village these conditions may remain unsolved for many years. Half of the student body of 625 is unable to bring food for lunch and many are without shoes, but still the determination by both teachers and most students to get an education is readily apparent. Money from the government for supplies and books often comes so late in the year that it is of little or no benefit to the school, but despite all this the classroom blackboards were filled with formulas, definitions and sentence structures to educate the children and many of the teachers were bent over lesson plan books during the lunch hour when we visited. Kids there and throughout Kenya learn their tribal language at home and by kindergarten and first grade are on their way to learning the national languages of Kiswahili and English.

The new president of Kenya, Mwai Kabaki, was elected on a promise to spend more money on the development of rural Kenya, so the possibility of electricity, an increase in the number of wells and better roads is greatly hoped for by the villagers. Currently only 20 percent of Kenya enjoys electricity with Nairobi taking most of that percentage. Some signs that the current administration might live up to its word is seen in the road leading from the national highway to this village. Traveling it some years ago found us advancing at a snail's pace due to the deeply rutted narrow path that could only be negotiated by a four wheel drive vehicle. Now, sections of this road, while still unpaved, are rock hard and smooth. Great piles of rock and sand line the remaining sections and their presence gives promise that the road will be completed. While there are few, if any cars in the area, it presents a much safer surface for the villagers to walk and makes the carrying of babies, market supplies and the daily water easier.

It is of course the dream of the Makena Foundation that some of our students will return to live and solve some of the problems that face the people of Maraigushu for they are a hard working, loving and prayerful people.

Yes, I want to give the priceless gift of education to a deserving child this holiday season.

Please accept my tax-deductible gift, payable to MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.,
2248 Garland Drive, Birmingham, AL 35216.

- I want to sponsor a child for one year for \$1,200.
- I would like to share in the sponsorship of a child for one year for \$600.
- I am unable to sponsor a child at this time, but please use my gift of \$_____ to help as needed with tuition, personal care items, uniforms, activity fees or food staples.
- You have permission to mention my support in your publication(s).
- I prefer to make my gift anonymously.
- I am unable to contribute now, but please keep me informed about the work of MAKENA Children's Foundation.
- I would like to share my story relating to Africa or my sponsored child. Please contact me by phone or by e-mail .

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ e-mail _____