

Changing
the world
one
child
at a time

MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

Spring 2009 Vol. 10, No. 1

JAMBO



A Message from the President

Foundation
President
Sherri Mills

SPRING IS EVERYWHERE!

We hope this newsletter finds our sponsors, donors and friends well. As I write this, Spring is bursting forth here in Alabama. The redbud, cherry, pear and dogwood trees have bloomed. How extraordinarily happy the world looks. But, this morning we hear that we will have a freeze early next week.

My visits to see our kids give me the perpetual feeling that spring has come or will soon arrive. I am concerned by what I read in the newspapers about all the problems in Africa, Kenya included. But, when I think of what a small group of Americans have done in the lives of a small, but I say very important, group of children in this challenged country of Kenya, I cannot help but feel Spring is on its way.

These children are blossoming physically, mentally, socially. But more importantly their dreams, which lay dormant within each of them when we first knew them, have budded. Their self-esteem and belief in the possibilities of their futures, is even more lovely than Alabama in all its budded-out spring.

KENYA'S FOCUS ON OBAMA

Questions about Obama followed me wherever I went on my last trip. Upon my saying "Jambo" to one of the land maintenance men at Elite School, he walked toward me, held out his hand as I extended my hand to shake his. He held onto my hand, turned our hands first so that his hand was on top, then tapped his brown hand with his opposite index finger. Then he turned our hand over so that my hand was on top and tapped my white hand with his index finger, and said with a big smile, "Obama!" It was a memorable moment for both of us.

One of our students, Rachael Njeri, sat on the edge of her chair as our time together came to an end. I always end our interviews with the question, "Do you have any problems or concerns you would like to discuss? Any questions or anything you'd like to tell me?" Her face was full of expectation as she looked me directly in the eyes and asked, "Who did you vote for?" I answered, and she pointed at my

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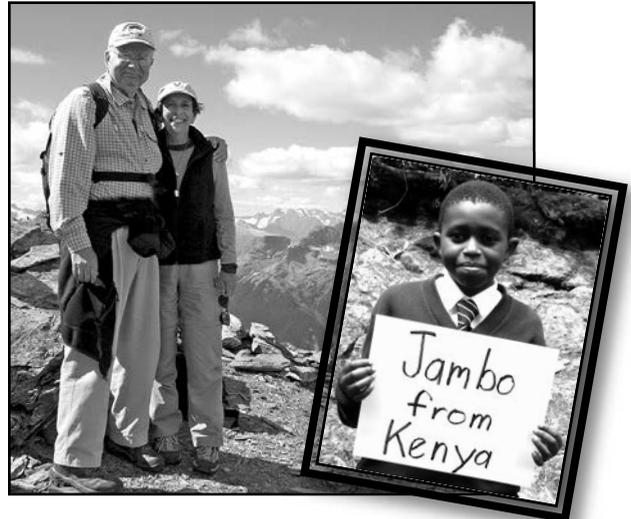
Goodhews Form Strong Links

By Mary Jo Baich

In our world of computer technology, a simple click of the mouse takes you from one avenue of pursuit and quickly links you to another. Life too, has a way of accomplishing this same goal.

Six years ago a retired businessman from Atlanta, Bill Goodhew, begins to consider East Africa as a travel destination. Bill's passion for photography has already had him bounding around the globe to Iceland, Galapagos, Spitzberger (Arctic Norway), Italy, Patagonia, Madagascar and Alaska. Bill creates slide shows to showcase these exotic worlds at his grandchildren's classrooms in Chicago. His love of photography educates these students about the unfamiliar animals and colorful cultures that exist there. His love of capturing wildlife-in-action never fails to motivate him to head out to yet another destination.

In a separate world in Kenya, a small barefooted boy named Peter Gatere trudges along the road on a cold highlands morning to his village school in Maraigushu. Mr Giitau, headmaster of the Manunga



Primary School, is driving to this same school and he stops to give the boy a much-needed lift. Mr. Giitau has taken a particular interest in the Makena Children's Foundation and over the years his thoughtful and wise recommendations have brought us children of promise, students who both value education and who are determined to succeed academically at a much higher level. Soon this headmaster begins to drive Peter Gatere to school each day and through their conversations he sees that this small child has much promise. CLICK, lives are linked.

By 2003 Bill Goodhew

years to see the amazing wildlife and breathtaking scenery of Kenya so he joins a photographic safari to pursue this desire. His guide is the talented and accomplished wildlife expert, Peter Muigai. During the course of their travels Peter Muigai tells Bill Goodhew about the Makena Children's Foundation. CLICK, CLICK.

As it turns out, Bill was raised in Birmingham, Alabama. After returning home to Atlanta and sharing his travels with his wife of 48 years, Joan, they call Bill's brother, Pat, and sister-in-law, Claire, in Birmingham

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Graduates Looking to the Future

Makena's four secondary graduates (from left) Margaret Njokabi, Hannab Wanja, Peter Njore and Simon Ngure were among the students attending the recent Fun Day. They were recognized for graduating and also received a Ben Carson book as a graduation gift from the Foundation. Look for interviews with them in upcoming issues of Makena Musings.

Emergency!

By Sherri Mills

Simon Mwangi, who was 12 last November when I visited the children, enjoyed a normal, spirited interview with my husband, Bert, and me. However, at the end of our discussions I asked if he had any problems, concerns or questions. He responded by pulling down the waistband of his trousers and pulling up his shirt to show us a fairly large swelling on the right side of his stomach.

I asked my husband to come look at the lump, and when he palpated the swelling, Simon flinched and said it was painful. This started a bit of a fire drill that ended up with Simon going to the Nyahururu Hospital for a successful emergency appendectomy.



First, we called in Ezekiel Waithaka of the school staff who immediately called the school nurse. She quickly explained that she had sent Simon home a few weeks before to see a doctor for what she believed was appendicitis. Simon was treated with antibiotics in Naivasha where he was hospitalized for a week. He was sent back to school with antibiotics and told to come back to the hospital for a likely appendectomy when school was out for the holidays.

The nurse had followed up on Simon when he returned to school and all seemed to be well. When he began having pain and swelling again, he didn't realize the seriousness of the problem and did not return to the school nurse. But, upon seeing the swollen lump he now sported, she was alarmed and it was decided to take him to the school doctor immediately.

That afternoon Simon was seen by a surgeon. I asked to go along, but was told that if I went the price would certainly be increased because I was a "Mzungu" (white person). The surgeon and hospital agreed to take Simon for a very reasonable deposit and for a total cost of \$200. Luckily, we had brought more cash than usual and were able to pay the bill immediately. That night he received the surgery.

The next day the children made a "get well" card that Bert and I took to Simon. The school kept a dorm "mom" with Simon every minute of his stay, and the school nurse visited

him twice a day. Simon seemed to rather enjoy the whole thing – having me take photos of him with the doctor, nurse and school "mom," photos of Simon in the bed, sitting on the bed and on and on. Then he asked if he could have a photo of just Bert and himself. It's so touching how these boys without fathers or grandfathers are very interested in male companionship.

Simon asked Bert to go into another area where they could talk. Thinking that he might have an embarrassing question to ask, Bert followed Simon outside his ward to "talk." Bert doesn't hear as well as he once did, and early in our visits we have some problems with the British English as opposed to American English. After a few minutes Bert thought the gist of the conversation was that Simon was asking for a certain kind of soda. Bert's following question regarding where one might buy this soda was fodder for more discussion. After several minutes it finally dawned on Bert that Simon's request was for a remote control car. I guess these children still see the man as the decision maker and money holder, and when you are a poor boy with limited time with a Mzungu, you have to "strike fast while the iron is hot."

Simon recovered quickly. His guardians came every day to visit him and bring him food. And, after the school nurse met with family members and felt assured that they were willing and able to do all the home care Simon would need, he was sent home with his uncles. We came home feeling good about the school's commitment to health care and the procedures they have in place to see that the children are well-cared for. We came home also with another great story about our students and their lives...



In photos, top left: Simon Mwangi in his hospital bed. Above his head is the "Get well" greeting sent to him by other Makena kids. Simon enjoyed reading all the encouraging notes from his friends. Middle: Bert Brosowsky and Simon Mwangi. Bottom: (from left) Dorm "Mom", Sherri Mills and Elite School Nurse.

President's Message

(Continued from front)

husband without losing eye contact with me and asked, "Who did he vote for?" She is only 14 but she is certainly interested in American politics.

A representative of Origins Safaris, Gloria, who met us at the airport for transport to our hotel was very interested in and supportive of Obama, but finished with a very poignant remark. She said, "I hope he will not disappoint the U.S." Sometimes I

forget that my government's actions have such great impact throughout our planet. I wanted to say to Gloria, "I hope he will not disappoint you." However, I know their innocent and naive expectations are unrealistic for this new president who has so many challenges in his own country. For some Kenyans, their tenacious hold on tribalism and the strength of blood connections give them unrealistic expectations of President Obama.

Yes, times are tough ...

Massive lay-offs, tragic foreclosures, bank calamities. Many of us never thought we would live through an economic crisis like this one. But we all know that this recession does not stop at our borders. In the larger context of world poverty, most of us in America still live a privileged life.



The Makena Children's Foundation is truly a labor of love. No American working for MCF receives a salary. All are volunteers. Only one man in Kenya receives a much-needed and well-deserved stipend for his outreach to our families. All other Kenyans working with us generously volunteer their time.

There are expenses, however, that go beyond sponsorship. For example, we cover the costs of our Kenyan volunteers when they are doing work for the Foundation and we respond to our students' families when they are in deep crisis. We also provide the educational expenses of a few deserving Kenyan students who do not have sponsors.

And so, if you are like most Americans – still privileged when compared with the rest of our global family – please consider sending the Makena Children's Foundation a donation to sustain our important work. Won't you please help us now?

Yes, I want to join in the effort and give the priceless gift of education to a deserving child.

Please accept my tax-deductible gift, payable to Makena Children's Foundation, Inc., 4138 Crossings Lane, Birmingham, AL 35242.

- I wish to lend a hand to the smooth operation of the Makena Children's Foundation with a gift of :
 - \$50 \$100 \$200 \$400 \$600 \$1,000

- 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 .



Makena students work on a group project during "Fun Day 2008."

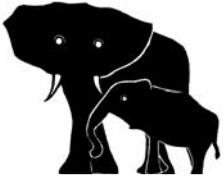
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If you'd like to help bring the priceless gift of education to deserving children, please complete the form inside and send your donation TODAY to the Foundation at the address above! Your gift will be greatly appreciated!



A Fun Day Was Had by All!

All the Makena students enjoyed Fun Day 2008 – as did Bert Brosowsky and Francis Karanja (front, far right).

Goodhews Form Strong Links (Continued from front)

to share the trip and to learn more about the Makena Children's Foundation. Fortunately, Pat and Claire Goodhew know Makena's President Sherri Mills. [CLICK](#).

So in a brief span of time divergent worlds come together. Now through the thoughtful generosity of Bill and Joan Goodhew, our small child Peter Gatere has a future. Of course making the transition from a small village school to the Elite Schools two hours away does not happen easily. Mr Guitau made sure that Peter had the needed round-trip transportation to Nyahururu to take the entrance exam. It was a joyous trip home as they celebrate Peter's passing the challenging exam and his opportunity to obtain a first class education.

Life has not been so easy for Peter Gatere. The child of a single mother who died when he was only 6 years old, his young aunt, Grace Wanjiru, takes care of him when he is home from school. She earns enough money working as a waitress at a small kiosk to keep Peter, his sister and three brothers together. It is a huge accomplishment for this young woman. It is her meeting this challenge that makes Grace such a strong role model in the eyes of her nephew, Peter.

Peter has now been attending Elite Schools for 5 years and is presently in the 7th grade. When not in the classroom he loves playing soccer, in the defensive position. Peter also belongs to the Wildlife Club, an organization devoted to taking the kids on hikes and identifying and studying the animals of Kenya. His favorite food is rice with kale, which certainly sounds like a more healthy food choice than most children in the USA would name. Peter helps out at home during school breaks by watering the plants in the garden and herding sheep. He is best described by all who know him as sweet, smart, hard working and comfortable around adults.

The Makena Children's Foundation gives a hearty thanks to Bill and Joan for their continued support of Peter and his education. Though the Goodhews' support a number of charitable organizations, they opened their hearts to include yet another. We are most grateful for the link they created from Atlanta to Maraigushu. It is the hope of all the sponsors of the Makena Children's Foundation that the links these students make in their families and in their country will continue to reverberate for years to come.

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