

Changing
the world
one
child
at a time

MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

Summer 2012 Vol. 13, No. 1

JAMBO



A Message from the President

Foundation
President
Sherri Mills

The joy and pride of prize giving day...

Attending Prize Giving Day at Elite Schools is always a highlight of a Makena Children's Foundation trip to Kenya. Anne Batzer and I attended yet another of those special days this past April.

One can feel the excitement as Prize Giving Day approaches. The grounds of the campus are given a thorough grooming, tents are erected, 2000 chairs are set in place and the brassy sound of the marching band fills the campus. Small and large voices can be heard in rehearsal as the children polish their songs and dances.

On the morning of the event, exhibits by science and math clubs are on display, along with the exhibits of the Red Cross and other school clubs. Parents arrive from all over Kenya and some foreign countries to support their students and enjoy the festivities.

The marching band, looking smart in their new maroon and gold uniforms, along with a large contingent of Kenyan Girl and Boy Scouts began the celebration as they marched onto the field and then passed in review before the attending dignitaries. Kenya's national anthem was sung with great pride and a couple of carefully selected hymns followed.

Groups of students from Kindergarten to Form 4 entertained with delightful songs, native dances and skits. Form 4 students performed a skit highlighting the age-old power struggle between teenagers and parents. Another skit focused on the dangers of AIDS.

My favorite performance is always the kindergarteners in their pinafores singing loudly, while dancing enthusiastically and in perfect unison without a director! The tribal songs and dances showed pride and respect for the past.

After remarks by the principle and school manager, the guest of honor, Professor Dankit Nassuma, Vice Chancellor of Kabarak University, gave the keynote address.

Then at last the most important part of the day's activities began – the presentation of awards to the outstanding 2011 students. How our hearts swelled as we watched as one after another of our Makena kids crossed the stage and accepted his or her award.

Awards given were as follows: John Muiruri, Bugle; Simon Mwangi, Most Disciplined; Samson Machohi, Math, Chemistry, Geography and Computers; Rose Waithira, Biology, Chemistry, Business Studies and Math.

(Continued on back)

One Grandmother's Story

By Anne Batzer

Esther Magiri smiles when she says she has more grandchildren than she can count, "more than 10," she explains. But she is definite when she says she raised five sons and eight daughters. She is also clear that she and her husband are raising one of their grandsons, Makena student John Muiri.

of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and first brought Osama bin Laden to the attention of the American people.

For a moment, Esther's mood becomes quiet and somber. "My daughter was one more victim of the attack," she says.



Born in 1940, Esther completed the third grade when required school fees made further education too expensive for her family. "I always wanted to have more schooling," she says.

She and her family moved to the village of Maraigushu, where the Makena families live, in 1969.

The story of her grandson John Muiri's birth is deeply moving. Esther relates that her daughter, John Muiri's mother, was living in a village near Nairobi called Kiambu when she became pregnant. She went into labor on August 7, 1998, the day a truck bomb blasted the United States embassy in Nairobi, killing dozens of people and injuring hundreds more.

Esther says medical personnel attending to her daughter were called and "ran to rescue" those trapped in the embassy rubble. "They left my daughter alone during labor and she died about 2 months later from complications from childbirth." The attack was linked to local members

Esther and her husband have raised John since infancy.

But this spirited woman lights up again when she talks about the opportunity John has for education through the Makena Children's Foundation and his sponsors, Jeanette Hancock and Geraldine Gillespy of Mountain Brook, Alabama.

"We are so thankful because we could not afford to send John to school. I don't even know how to express my gratitude. This impacts our whole family."

John Muiri reflects his grandmother's energetic approach to life. A good musician, he was honored as "Best Bugler" on Prize Giving Day at Elite Schools.

Thinking about John's future, Esther concludes, "I always pray and hope that John will make it in society, be important and help others after I am gone."



Talented Hands Raised for Makena

By Mary Jo Baich

Anne Batzer and her husband, John (pictured below), are long-term sponsors for Makena student Alice Njoki. Anne travels with Sherri Mills each year to Kenya to do the work of the Foundation. This Kenyan expedition also allows Anne to visit her sponsored student, Alice. Anne and Alice have become close, and, in the interest of furthering their bond, Anne has taken up reading Danielle Steel's novels because Alice enjoys these books very much. Sharing the plot lines and values in these stories gives the two of them lots to talk about. Previously this literary genre was not a familiar one for Anne Batzer!



Anne's lifelong passions for children and non-violence led her to a career in Early Childhood Special Education. She spent her professional years working with families of special needs children ages birth-to-five in order to maximize their child's development. As she travels about the Rogue Valley, she is often stopped by grateful parents who remember all she did for their families.

Recently Anne has added a new mission to her busy schedule. Actually it's more of a mantra: "Find Money for Makena." Anne has taken to her computer doing hours of research looking for grant monies for the Makena Children's Foundation. If you know of a possible grant source, please email Anne at annebatzer@aol.com.



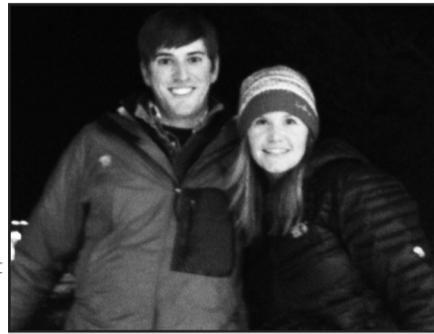
Anne's passion for the Makena Children's Foundation has also inspired her two daughters, Daisy Hering (pictured at right with her family) of Ashland, Oregon, and Samantha Hammell of San Jose, California. Now they, too, have raised their hands to help the Foundation.

Little Drummer Girl

Makena student Hannah Njeri (third from left) marches with the Elite School Band during Prize Giving Day.

Daisy is married to Dave Hering, a fisheries biologist at Crater Lake National Park. His work involves the restoration of bull trout, a native species. Dave sometimes says that all the fish in the park report to him. (He is known for his great sense of humor.) Daisy is an attorney working mostly in the field of business. Together Daisy and Dave have two children, 7-year-old Violet and 3-year-old Hazel.

Samantha's career is in real estate. Her husband, Troy Hammell, works for Applied Materials as a process engineer, which translated means he keeps the machines that make semiconductors running. It is an exacting business. Sami and Troy (pictured at right) are excitedly awaiting the arrival of their first child in August. Getting invited to any of their homes for dinner is a treat, keep that in mind if you are ever out West.



Samantha and Daisy are knowledgeable about technology and marketing and are lending their talents to improve the Makena Children's Foundation website. Their goal is to create a more dynamic web address. Both women want the website to give more up-to-date information about the Foundation so there is a reason to keep returning to the site. It is their hope that these improvements will be completed by the end of summer.

We welcome these talented women and give thanks for their creative efforts in helping Makena continue its goals. I, of course, am very proud of their achievements and their generous donation of time to Makena, since I am related to them: Anne is my sister-in-law and Daisy and Samantha are my nieces! We will keep you informed of their progress.



Makena comes to Southern Oregon

By Mary Jo Baich

Upon hearing that Makena leaders Sherri Mills and her husband Bert Brosowsky, were coming for a visit to Southern Oregon, my sister-in-law, Anne Batzer, was on the phone to me suggesting that we throw a wine-and-cheese party as a fundraiser for the Makena Children's Foundation.

We agreed this event would put some life into the quiet nights of January, celebrate Sherri and Bert coming to our town, and more importantly give us all a venue to talk about the work of the Makena Foundation, as well as raise some much needed funds for the Makena project. The fact that we scheduled the event on Martin Luther King Day seemed especially fitting.

So we invited family (of which we have a lot) and friends. We fashioned an interesting menu, gathered some of our region's well-crafted wines, created large photos of some of our Makena students and awaited Sherri and Bert's arrival in Medford.

The gathering was held at Anne and her husband John's home along the Rogue River with over thirty guests attending. As the evening progressed we got down to the party's official reason for being. Sherri, Bert, Anne and I spoke about the goals of the Foundation and then several sponsors talked about their experiences.

The evening ended with many generous donations added to the Makena coffers and with the exciting news that a new sponsor had surfaced for Johnson Kamau, a fine young student whose tuition has been covered by the Foundation. In the end it was a satisfying way to share the news of the Foundation and to increase the funds needed to continue our goals.

Maybe it's time to invite Sherri and Bert to your town and enjoy a Makena wine and appetizer party!



Congratulations, Graduates!



By Anne Batzer

We are so proud of all the students sponsored through the Makena Children's Foundation. Although their grades vary, after our recent individual meetings with them we can honestly say that each of them is putting admirable effort into their academic studies. They all understand that the opportunity to complete their education is a precious gift and has the potential to transform the course of their lives, their family's prospects and Kenya's future.

Recently 12 pupils completed their secondary education. All of them went through the rigorous month-long process of taking the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) exam. They joined over 400,000 students in this process. This exam is the only yardstick used in Kenya to determine eligibility for higher education. Grades are not factored into the equation.

Three of our students – Rose Waithira, Joseph Kairuki and Samson Machoi – scored high enough to receive invitations to Universities and partial government scholarships. These scores mean they were in the top 3,000 students of that large 400,000 pool. Even our student who received the lowest score did better than one-third of the other Kenyan students who took the exam.

Various school officials repeatedly told us these scores are unusually high for children whose education is sponsored through a foundation.

With Kenya's estimated unemployment rate at 40% we know that our students need some post-secondary education or training to get jobs.

Those of our students not going directly to Universities can enter Certificate or Diploma programs at technical schools. Much like our community college system, Certificate programs can allow students to meet eligibility requirements for Diploma programs which can give them credit toward University entrance.

Our goal now is to enroll Mary Gatuku and Rachel Njeri in the Kenya Medical Training College where they can receive training in their chosen field: nursing. Simon Gatonye will become a teacher. Daniel Gathngii will study aeronautical engineering. And Stephen Mungai Mbugua, Rosemary Njoki, John Karanja, Isabel Muthoni and Mary Muthoni Mwangi will enroll at the Rift Valley Institute of Science and Technology in Nakuru to pursue careers in various fields guided by their aptitudes, interests and test scores.

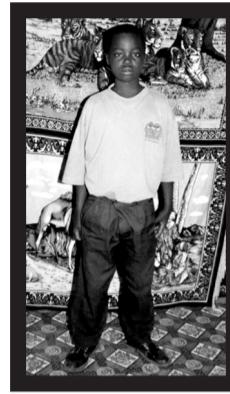
Of course, the futures of these students depend on our ability to continue to fund their education. Heartfelt gratitude to the sponsors who have agreed to continue their support of these students. Each carries within them the potential to make a positive difference in our changing world.

The Continuing Story of Ruoro Six Years Later

By Mary Jo Baich and James Ruoro Muruthi

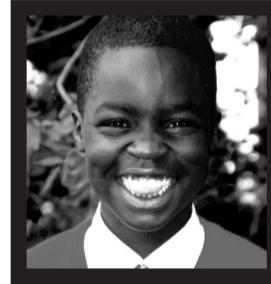
Many of our readers will remember Ruoro's story, first detailed in the Spring 2002 issue of *Musings*. Ruoro, who now uses his first name, James, was orphaned after his parents died in a tragic road accident. James fended for himself for a couple years living as a "street kid," wandering about Kenya. Eventually he was adopted by Jane and Peter Muigai.

As soon as he was sponsored by the Makena Children's Foundation, it was clear James and schooling had an affinity for one another. He was a star Makena pupil from grade through high school, achieving many accolades and honors. We are so proud of him, as he enters a PhD program.



We asked James to bring us up to date. So here, in his own words, his story:

"I graduated from Starehe Boys' Center in Nairobi in October of 2005 after a month-long period of tough national examinations. It was nice to kick back and relax for a couple of months, especially since I had been in school for a very long time. It had become a trend in the Kenyan education system for students to attend extra sessions between semesters to get caught up with course material. Therefore, any kind of break was welcomed with open arms.



"The responsibilities that come with living on a farm kept me busy for most part of the summer after my secondary school graduation. I immersed myself into the activities of tilling, weeding, milking, cleaning cow pens and irrigating crops in our Muigai family farm. I enjoyed most of the farm activities because I had taken a course in crop and animal husbandry in secondary school. The practices were a good way to practice the theoretical stuff I had learned in class. Of course, no one likes shoveling raw cattle manure out of pens.

"The break also meant time to reflect on life and what the future had for me. This was a crucial time in my personal as well as spiritual growth. Most afternoons were open for me to do as I please. Therefore, I read all the magazines and books that looked intriguing. I developed a love for novels about ancient Rome and biographies about great leaders like Nelson Mandela. I realized later that I liked those types of books because most characters were very resourceful.

"Church activities also filled significant portions of my daily schedule. I attended youth seminars and helped organize fundraisers as well as special functions such as weddings. I had a great time expanding my spiritual beliefs through Bible studies and prayer meetings.

"The next step for me was to complete college applications. The most challenging part of the whole process was the expectation to write essays to compete with other deserving students for scholarships based on merit. Little did I know that this would be the simplest kind of writing I would do in my college career.

"It was with great happiness and joy that I received the acceptance letter from Miami University of Ohio. I had been accepted into their interdisciplinary studies program with full funding for tuition as well as room and boarding. The whole process was made simpler by one Allan Winkler, a professor and friend at Miami University. I had a chance to meet Allan together with a group of retired professors on a safari during the summer before I joined school in August of 2006. This meeting was pivotal because Allan and his friends provided a crucial cushion in times when I required material and financial, as well as psychological, support.

"My first year at Miami was also my first out of Kenya. As we drove from Cincinnati airport into Oxford, I was not surprised by the tall buildings nor the mega-highway because, in my mind, anything less would not be America. I spent a couple of weeks with other international students in an array of events that were geared towards orienting us to our new environments. School was soon upon us.



"I had to adjust to a different way of writing and arguing my points amidst advancing my skills on the computer. The biggest change in my writing style was shifting to a more active voice. Moreover, I had to get used to the idea of doing homework, in the form of readings or writings, every night. This was not my idea of college; there is no way I was doing more homework than I did in primary school!

"I also had to make new friends to necessitate easier group work and general social life. My American friends introduced me to different American traditions such as Thanksgiving dinner and football.

"I made it my responsibility to enjoy life in college and to take advantage of all opportunities that came my way. Most memorable activity was the opportunity to serve as a resident assistant (RA) at the start of sophomore year. I enjoyed arranging monthly volunteer trips to Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine soup kitchens to serve food to hungry individuals. These opportunities were my way of giving back to the society. The mere opportunity to rally privileged students to interact with underserved populations brought joy to my heart.

"My senior year was marked by more responsibility. I grew a strong liking for public policy. I believe that the world can be a better place with proper public and social policies. Therefore, I decided that my capstone and future academic endeavors would revolve around policy analysis and improvement. I had also gained an interest in aging studies, since I believe that age and aging issues should be a topic for social justice just like race and sexual orientation. I was assigned to Hamilton's Booker T. Washington Community Center in my gerontological studies.

"For my capstone project, I created surveys and interviewed the older attendees of the center for needs assessment. It was clear that the people wanted opportunities to explore different attractions outside of their run-down community. At the same time, children and older people had to walk in chilly Midwest winters after time spent at the center. It was evident that the center was in dire need for a van. I worked on a successful \$13,000 grant and now the people can enjoy proper transportation.

"I graduated with cum laude honors and two majors. Then, my years in grad school at Miami went by quickly. I did work in research labs, collected data with professors and wrote papers for publishing. I also had a chance to visit with Sherri Mills and her family during one of my many trips to and from conferences.

"This is where I am today. I have just completed my Master's studies and I am on my way to a nice program in the University of Georgia for my PhD. I report to campus at the end of July.

"Thus, 6 years later I have had an opportunity to visit with the woman I will always call Makena (Sherri Mills) and her husband, Bert, and my former Makena sponsors, John and Arlene Edwards.

"I have enjoyed a good college experience, not to mention amazing life opportunities, thanks to my parents, Jane and Peter Muigai and the Makena Children's Foundation."





Birthday Wishes for Makena

When 6-year-old Violet Hering (above left) attended the Makena Children's Foundation fundraiser given by her great aunt Mary Jo Baich and her grandmother Anne Batzer, her little heart expanded to include Kenya's children. On the drive home from the gathering she told her parents that, in lieu of gifts, she would ask her friends to bring donations for MCF to her upcoming "bouncy" birthday party.

It was gratifying to receive the checks written by some of the parents, but most touching were the little bags and handfuls of coins given by some of the children. They had obviously raided their own piggy banks to help out and a total of \$178.87 was added to the Makena coffers.



Won't you please join Violet and her friends in supporting Makena Children's Foundation?

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

- I wish to sponsor a child with a gift of \$2,000 annually.
- 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 .

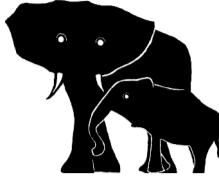
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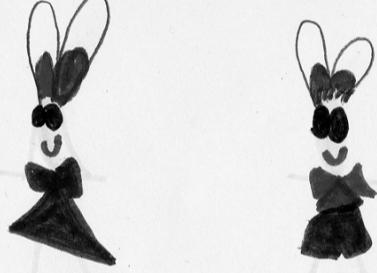
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MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.
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If you'd like to help bring the priceless gift of education to deserving children, please complete the form inside and send your donation TODAY.

Thank you for your gifts and your generosity! Because of your generosity I raised \$178.87 for Makena Children's Foundation. That amount will stretch far in Kenya and help an orphaned child have a better life. Love ☺
Violet



Learn more about Violet's fundraising efforts inside this edition of *Makena Musings*.

President's Message (Continued from front)

Our students were now holding multiple trophies when the most prestigious awards of all were announced – the awards for "Best Boy" and "Best Girl."

"Best Girl?" Our own Rose Waithira who received a very large trophy while 25 members of her extended family stood and cheered energetically. Her relatives made the long, uncomfortable Matatu ride from Maraigushu to witness this extraordinary day in the life of their family.

As the crowd cheered, Rose, a petite and rather shy girl, raised her huge trophy above her head with the same fervor you might see the Stanley Cup or the BCS trophy lifted up by a large athlete. Her smile could have provided sun for many dreary days.

After the close of the day's ceremonies, the school owners treated all of the attendees to lunch. All in all, a very memorable day!

NOTE: I offer my eternal gratitude to Anne Batzer who has left her family for the last two years (as well as in 2006) to accompany me to Kenya for two weeks. Anne's curiosity, optimism, compassion and zeal for other cultures, along with her wonderful sense of humor have been an incalculable gift to the Foundation and to me personally. Thanks, Anne.

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