

Changing
the world
one
child
at a time

MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

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JAMBO



A Message
from a
Board Member

Anne Batzer

I had just settled in for a little relaxing television when the news scrolled across the bottom of the screen – gunmen had attacked the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi. Even though I know that Kenya's capitol city has over 3 million residents, I did what we always do when we hear of a far-off tragedy: I worried about the people I know who live there.

I thought about the Makena students who attend various high schools and universities located all over Nairobi. And I thought about the Makena Children's Foundation's Kenya Director Francis Karanja, his wife Liz and daughters Rene and Angelina who make their home in Nairobi. Of course I worried that one or more of them might have been victims of the violence.

As I sent off an email to Francis and his brother Charles, I prayed that all the members of our Makena family were safe in their homes. Fortunately, I quickly received news from the Karanja brothers. No one we know was victimized, although one of their brothers had left the Westgate Mall a scant 40 minutes before the terrorists opened fire. Thank God.

The world watched along with me as this terrible drama unfolded over the next three days. Our hearts ached for Kenyans, so many working so diligently to improve their lives. These kind and gracious people deserve so much better than this.

At the Makena Children's Foundation we take heart that we are doing what we can: Believing that an educated citizenry is the best defense, we are working to educate Kenya's children. Our beautiful Makena Kids are growing in maturity and confidence. We trust that they will become strong adults who will make wise decisions about their own – and their country's – future.

This holiday season join me in giving thanks for the safety of all of our children and their families. Give thanks for the opportunity we have to educate these bright students. And give thanks for all we – Kenyans and Americans – have accomplished together.

A Safari and More Hearts Expanded

By Mary Jo Baich

Traveling to see Kenya's expansive savannahs and the multitude of animals that roams its plains is on many folks' "Gotta Do Travel List." East Africa offers a panorama of what Eden might have looked like and certainly a view of life very different from our own.

But what if there was even more to take in on an expedition to Kenya? This was the dream Bonnie Krebs had for her daughter, son-in-law and their three children.

It all started six years ago when Bonnie began her Makena Children's Foundation (MCF) sponsorship of Hannah Virginia Wangui in her studies at the Elite Schools in Nyahururu. Over the years, Bonnie had sent letters to Hannah Virginia with MCF President Sherri Mills and had been the recipient of letters and grades showing Hannah Virginia's progress.

But the great distance hampered the relationship, so Bonnie decided to travel to Kenya to meet this star student and to share the safari experience with her three grandchildren.



Bonnie and her family certainly enjoyed the spectacular scenery and tented camps they stayed in as they visited Amboseli National Park, Ol Pejeta Conservance (Jane Goodall's Chimpanzee Sanctuary) and the Maasai Mara Game Reserve. But she positively sparkles with joy when she tells about meeting Hannah Virginia.

Their visit began with a tour of the campus with Elite School's host, Master Simeon, Bonnie recalls. Then, the family took Hannah Virginia out to the nearby Thompson Falls Lodge for lunch and a little one-on-one time.

The next day, hosted by MCF's Kenya Liaison Manager Charles Karanja, Bonnie's family traveled to Hannah Virginia's home in the village of Maraigushu and, to their surprise, they discovered there is no actual village as we would define it. Instead, these widely separated, subsistent farmers of the Aberdare Mountain Highlands define themselves as "a village" more because of their relationships with one another than by actual physical proximity.

Upon arriving at Hannah Virginia's two-room, dirt-floored home, Bonnie's group was joyously greeted by Hannah Virginia's mother, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and their inquisitive neighbors who welcomed the family with song, tea and snacks.

Bonnie relates that Hannah Virginia is by nature sweet and shy, so it must have been overwhelming for her to encounter this large American family delegation. But Bonnie's three grandchildren, Virginia (13), Ellis (11) and Edward (9) had little trouble relating to their new friend. Upon asking Hannah Virginia what her favorite sport was, Hannah Virginia's reply was "skipping." This was momentarily puzzling, but the American contingency soon came to understand that Hannah Virginia meant "jumping rope" and so there was a quick scramble to find a rope.

One particularly touching moment happened when Hannah Virginia's mother offered a gift to the American family: The only copies of photographs she had of their deceased relatives. Thinking quickly, Bonnie offered to take a photo of their prized pictures so the Kenyan family could keep these remembrances while Bonnie graciously accepted their generous gift.

Bonnie and her family complimented the wonderful attention that Charles Karanja extended to them and gave him high praise for all he does for the Makena Children's Foundation.

For this family, the trip offered the full spectrum of what travel has to offer, and Bonnie says it is still difficult to put all their emotions into words. They returned to Alabama feeling very blessed to have experienced both the beauty and pain of Africa. It now feels like a second home and offers a powerful magnet for them to return someday. "More than anything," she says, "this trip to Kenya expanded all our hearts."

Please see back page for more photos from the Krebs family trip to Kenya.

A New Partnership

It is with deep gratitude that the Makena Children's Foundation announces the support of a generous grant from Innocent Eyes Project (IEP).

Although this professional alliance with IEP is new for us, our personal relationship with its founder, David Noyes, started many years ago. An international adventurer, photographer and travel writer, David first ventured to Kenya in 2000 where he met one of MCF's founders, Safari Guide Peter Muigai Muruthi. Muigai shared the Makena story with David and he was immediately intrigued with our mission and inspired by the children of Kenya.



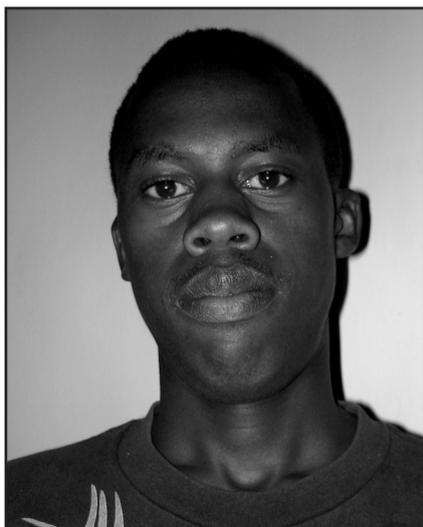
As David continued to journey through the developing world, he came to share our core belief that education is the most powerful gift we can give to help some beautiful children reach their full potential. David has been a close friend, advisor and contributor to the Makena Children's Foundation for more than a decade. Now, he's formed Innocent Eyes Project, a charity nonprofit that supports grassroots organizations working to educate children in developing countries.

"Words truly cannot express how deeply honored and proud we are to be the recipient of one of the first Innocent Eyes Project grants," says Makena Children's Foundation President Sherri Mills.

David says, "Over the years I met some very special individuals like Sherri, who saw a need, addressed a problem and were determined to make a difference in the lives of children. The story I want to tell is not a sad story. It is a story about the hopes and dreams of children and families. It is also about the gift we share as travelers to experience the world and our desire to give back to the people and places that have touched our lives."

To share in the adventure of this dynamic new organization – and to see David's stunning global photographs – click on the IEP link on the homepage of the Makena Children's Foundation website at www.makena.org; or go directly to the Innocent Eyes Project website at www.innocenteyesproject.org. You're in for a treat.

Innocent Eyes Project's vibrant energy is contagious. Opportunities to support IEP include an "Adventure Travel Auction" or how about "Climbing Kilimanjaro" with David? If you love travel, the discovery that comes from immersing yourself in other cultures and the heart-opening experience of looking into the eyes of our world's precious children, you'll feel right at home. You can also "like" IEP on Facebook or follow their feed on Twitter (@IEP_helpskids).



Money from the Innocent Eyes Project grant will join the funds from dedicated sponsors to directly support the university education of three bright, accomplished Makena students (clockwise, from upper left): Daniel Githinji, Samson Machohi (who is pictured with his proud grandmother) and Joseph Kairuki.

COMMITMENT- RELATIONSHIP- and sometimes more!!

By Mary Jo Baich

Inspired by Makena Children's Foundation President Sherri Mills, Bonnie Krebs –and a number of other Makena sponsors –have committed to helping a child in Kenya get an education. Later, they've traveled to meet their sponsored child. The journey starts with the desire to help a student who otherwise would have little opportunity to get an education.

Some of our students don't have sponsors, but we know they deserve an education and so we've stepped up to offer them a hand.

We need help with this plan and they need to know that someone cares for them in a special way.

Won't you be that person who changes their life?

You can sponsor them in part or in whole –your choice.

Who knows, maybe somewhere down the road you, too, will meet the beautiful child you gifted with this amazing opportunity.



In photo above, Makena Board President Sherri Mills gets a hug of thanks from Hannah Virginia Wangui.



At left, sponsor Bonnie Krebs and her grandchildren visit with Makena students during a recent visit to Kenya.



Help change a life this holiday season.

Even if you never meet your sponsored child, it's a journey you will never regret.

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/assist with higher education 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 .

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ e-mail _____



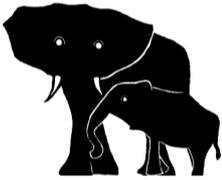
Hearts Expanded during Visit to Kenya



Please see front to read about the Krebs family trip to Kenya.

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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.



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