

Changing
the world
one
child
at a time

MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc. Spring 2015 Vol. 16, No. 1

JAMBO



A Message
from the
President

Anne Batzer

During my annual working trip to Kenya, there is always a moment in Nyahururu when I sit down in the grass, look at the sky and wonder at how I came to be in this remote location, doing this important work with these good, fascinating people. I marvel at this miracle in my life.

A little over a year ago when I was elected President, my role changed. I became responsible for the daily running of the organization. Now I need to make sure laws are followed, deadlines are met, and nitty-gritty problems are solved. I worried that the incredible joy I had always felt in my work with the Makena Children's Foundation might diminish.

What has happened, instead, is a near daily experience of renewing faith in the abundant generosity of the human spirit. This volunteer job is the perfect antidote to the constant barrage of gloomy news in the headlines. I could fill pages with examples, here are just a few:

— A brief, chance meeting in a grocery store with an old friend resulted in his Rotary Club taking on the co-sponsorship of one of our boys.
— Sharing information in this newsletter about students who had lost sponsors due to the recession brought immediate responses: Our three students who had no sponsors now have them. Their educational futures are assured.

— A generous donor has supplied laptop computers to our university students. The world has opened up for these bright young people and their grades have improved.

— One couple, Makena sponsors on a journey to Addis Ababa, is taking a side trip to Nairobi to meet and spend time with the student they have supported for many years. I can only imagine how much this visit will impact all their lives.

— The Innocent Eyes Project has graced us with a grant for the second consecutive year. Their work continually inspires us.

— A former District Governor of Rotary International has planted the seeds for the possibility of future joint projects. Our Kenyan Manager Charles Karanja has been inducted into the Rotary Club in Naivasha, enriching his life and starting a collaboration that has exciting possibilities.

(Continued on back)

"A Weekend I Will Never Forget"

By Mary Jo Baich

There's an old adage: "If you want to be interesting, be interested in others." This wise proverb fits Makena Children's Foundation sponsors Beverley and Keith Patrick like a glove.

The Patricks, from Syracuse New York, began sponsoring Rose Wathira 15 years ago when Rose was just six years old. Through photos and reports from Kenya they have watched Rose grow.



Early this year when the Patricks were in the midst of planning a trip to Ethiopia they realized that a flight from Addis Ababa to Nairobi would allow them to meet their long-time student.

Calling their time together, "a weekend I will never forget," Rose was overwhelmed to meet the couple who have transformed her future. Now a student majoring in Microbiology at the University of Nairobi, Rose is "a lovely girl, a really special, good young lady," according to Keith.

As luck would have it, the weekend of the Patrick's arrival in Nairobi, a Makena Alumni Club meeting was scheduled. The Club promotes strong bonds between our university students and alumni, provides mentoring, helps these young people access their job skills and encourages them to complete projects that will benefit their home village of Maranguishu. (*For more information about the Alumni Club, please see page 2 of this newsletter.*)



After being asked—just the night before—to be one of the program speakers for the alumni meeting, Keith, who is retired from a career dedicated to helping those with developmental disabilities, rose to the occasion delighting the students not only with his humor, but explaining the great joy he gets from helping others. To the question of what makes life interesting, Keith encouraged the students to "reach out to people, touch their lives." For example, Keith told them, "If you have a car, then find out who needs a ride, if that person says no—then look further."

Keith described the alumni meeting as "clear and positive." He said he immediately was won over by the intelligence and heart of Makena volunteer Francis Karanja who coordinates the Alumni Club, calling him "a gem." He described the students and alumni at the meeting as "respectful and so happy to see each other."

After the meeting the Patricks accompanied Rose on a tour of the University of Nairobi. The next day they took Rose on a game drive in Nairobi National Park. This wildlife center teems with lions, giraffes and zebras with the skyline of Nairobi as backdrop. They also went to the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, a haven of protection for elephants and black rhino from the poaching in East Africa.

"This week-end was so much fun for Beverley and me because Rose was there," Keith said. "It gave us so much pleasure."

Rose said she will remember the weekend forever. But judging from the emails we received from those attending the alumni meeting, the Patricks will be long remembered by not just Rose, but by all the students who met them.

Pictured with Rose and the Patricks in this photograph is Makena's Country Director Francis Karanja.



Makena Alumni Group Going Strong

By Anne Batzer

Launched last summer, The Makena Alumni Club (MAC) meets quarterly. This group, composed of our university students and alumni, has the long-term goal of working together to fund education for young Kenyan students, eventually becoming independent of American funders. This theme of "paying it forward" is emphasized at each gathering. The group also meets for peer support and mentoring.

The Fall meeting of the club took place in Naivasha with the cooperation of the Naivasha Rotary Club. Makena's Kenyan Manager Charles Karanja was recently invited to join this Rotary group and he scheduled two of its prominent members, Edwin Ngonga and Joseph Kamau, as presenters. Both speakers emphasized the importance of not taking the gift of education for granted and working hard to maximize its potential. Both also talked about the importance of gratitude in life. Naivasha Rotary Club President Juanita Ndila joined the group for a lively lunch.

One of our new university students who attended this meeting emphasized the value of peer support. "Finding out that all the other Makena students were having the same problems adjusting to college life—for the first time, you have to figure out how to schedule your time—was good. It helped me relax to know I'm not the only one," said Alice Njoki.

The Spring meeting found the Alumni group back in Nairobi where Makena Country Director Francis Karanja facilitated them in writing a personal vision statement. Keynote speaker at the event was David Wagacha, an entrepreneur and managing director of AzmaSoft. David explored values with the group and shared leadership ideas he gleaned from a meeting he attended with leaders from all over Africa called "Leadership in the 21st Century." The presentation focused on the particular challenges and opportunities facing Kenya.

Also presenting to the group were Makena sponsors Beverley and Keith Patrick. (*Please see the article about their visit and a photo from this meeting on page 1 of this newsletter.*) Keith summed up his experience with the group saying, "The focus of the group was right on, it was wonderful!"



In February, Makena Liaison Manager Charles Karanja was inducted into the Naivasha Rotary Club. Pictured with him is Club President Juanita Ndila.

An Interrupted Friendship

By Mary Jo Baich

What a relief and joy it is to have reconnected with Makena student Daniel Kimani Njorge!

My husband Ed and I began our bond with Kimani in 1996. After the death of his mother from breast cancer, Kimani, the youngest child in his family, was the second student to enter the Makena Children's Foundation.

I first wrote of our friendship in this newsletter in the Fall of 2004 when Makena Founder Sherri Mills and I visited Kimani at Elite School in Nyahururu. By the time of the article, Kimani and I had met three times, but overcoming Kimani's natural shyness still took a good bit of patience for both of us. I remember fondly joining him at his 7th grade science class and getting time to talk with him out on the playground after the school day. After that last visit, I felt we were finally on the cusp of a growing friendship and I left him knowing he was in safe hands and getting a good education.

Within a short time after returning home this illusion was shattered as Kimani's family issues intervened and he was taken from Elite School and thus completely out of our lives.

For years we worked with our Kenyan friends and colleagues to find him. We just wanted to know that Kimani was safe. No one could locate him. For nine long years we also searched the World Wide Web to see if there were any clues of his whereabouts, but no trace of him did we find.

Then, early in October of 2014, Kimani reached out through social media and found us! Since that time Kimani and I have exchanged emails on a nearly daily basis. Kimani's life has not been easy, but he has been able to continue with his education. He is now a senior at Mt. Kenya University in Thika, majoring in Education. In May he will do his student teaching assignment and after completing this work, he will graduate.

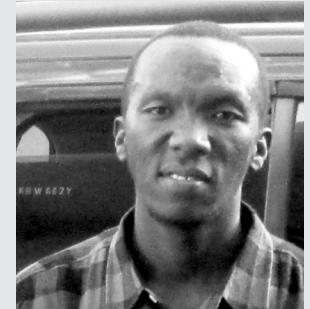
No longer shy, Kimani is a funny, outgoing and sincere young man. Charles Karanja, our Kenyan manager, has met with Kimani several times to mentor and encourage him as he takes his last steps towards getting his degree.

What was lost has been found, and the story of our friendship happily continues.



Above:
Kimani as a child

Below:
Kimani today



Congratulations, Daniel Githinji!

As Makena students get close to college graduation, some have the opportunity to participate in internships. Daniel Githinji, who studies Quantity Surveying at the Technical University of Kenya, had a particularly interesting experience last Fall.

Quantity Surveying is a major that prepares students for jobs as estimators and financial consultants for construction projects. Daniel was appointed to an internship with Kenya's Ministry of Public Works which oversees public facilities construction and monitors private construction.

Daniel's internship experience gave him the opportunity to travel with public officials throughout Kenya to inspect construction sites. And it gave him a glimpse into the professional world. He says he enjoyed "meeting with various dignitaries in

government and attending meetings with them in prestigious Nairobi hotels."

Sponsored by the Innocent Eyes Project (innocenteyesproject.org) Daniel dreams of one day owning his own construction company. But his dreams go beyond business ownership. In a letter of gratitude to David Noyes, Executive Director of Innocent Eyes Project, Daniel expressed his aspirations with eloquence:

"I really like that I am able to pursue what I am passionate about and I believe I will go far. You were heavenly sent to come and rescue my dreams and capabilities that would have been long ago vanished due to lack of education. You realized I am small but have bigger dreams and I thank you for that coz you really are doing a miracle to me since I wouldn't have been here if it were not for you."



"The tool you are giving me, I shall use it to eradicate poverty in my society, country and even the continent. Brighter future is ahead of me and I am praying that God will help me to give back to the community. I have gained a lot of things, experiences, skills and the beauty of giving whole heartedly."

Asante Sana!

That's Swahili for "Thank you very much!" We are so thankful for all you do for the children we serve. Without the support of our loyal sponsors who faithfully send generous checks, our students would not be able to attend school.

Our desire is to sponsor as many children as possible. That's why the Foundation has a very low overhead. All Americans working for the Foundation are volunteers who work from our homes, so we have no rent or utility fees. Still, some of our students have only partial sponsorship. We depend on donations of all sizes to keep these students in school.

Will you be Samson's Co-sponsor?

Samson Machohi is a star not only in the classroom, but in his interpersonal skills as well. A natural mediator, Samson's humble, gentlemanly demeanor is the source of his quiet, but strong leadership abilities. Orphaned at the age of 5, Samson earned a scholarship for a special program at prestigious Strathmore University following his graduation from secondary school. Now, he has just two more years to complete his Bachelor's degree in Information Technology at Multi Media University. Samson has a close and loving relationship with his grandmother and a profound relationship with his co-sponsor who has mentored and encouraged him. He has repeatedly told her his ultimate goal is to work with the Makena Alumni Club to fund education for other Kenyan students.

Co-sponsorship of Samson for **just two years** would insure his graduation.

Co-sponsorship is \$1,000 per year.

Will you be the one to insure that Samson finishes school?

Please accept my tax-deductible gift, payable to Makena Children's Foundation, Inc., 711 Medford Center, #117, Medford, OR 97504.

- I wish to sponsor Samson with a gift of \$1,000 annually (for 2 years).
- 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 _____

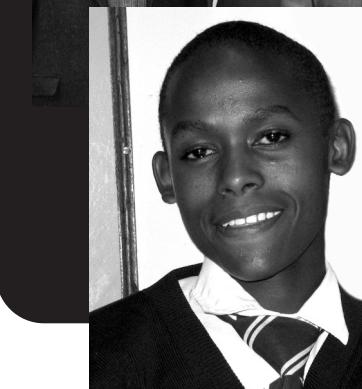
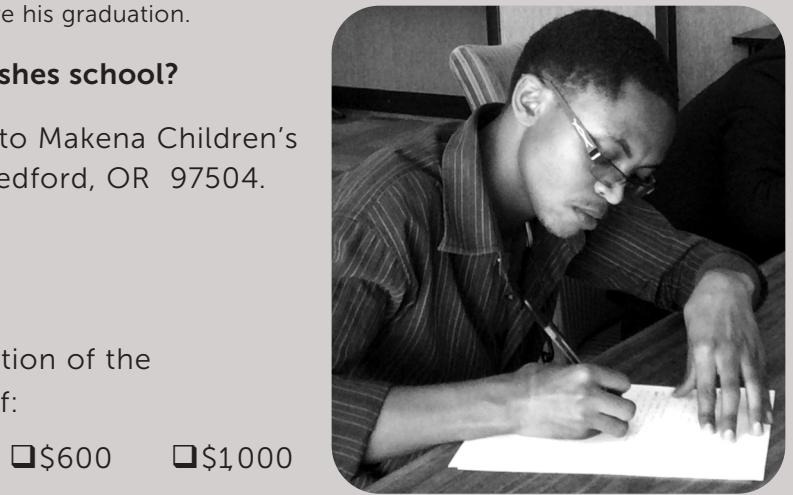
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Service at Its Finest

Service clubs have been our good and reliable partners since the founding of the Makena Children's Foundation. We are so grateful to the Rogue Rotary Club from Medford, Oregon, that just recently joined with us to support education in Kenya.

Members of Rogue Rotary's World Services Committee, including its President Paul Robinson (third from left) pictured with MCF President Anne Batzer (fifth from left) have come forward to co-sponsor Makena student David Maina. Because of this support, David just entered secondary school at Elite School in Nyahururu. All Kenyan students must score well on the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exam in order to qualify for entrance to secondary school. David's score put him in the top 6% of all Kenyan students who took this very challenging test! David's co-sponsor is longtime Makena supporter and friend, LaVerne Ramsey.





An Entrepreneur in Maraiguishu

A hard day's work in our students' home village means taking milk on the dusty 10-mile trip into Naivasha to try and sell it. This farmer is one of the more well-to-do residents as evidenced by his possession of a motorbike—a rarity in the village. He also obviously owns cows, highly prized for their milk. Many families do not have the means to keep animals other than chickens.

Photo by LaVerne Ramsey

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MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.
711 Medford Center, #117
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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.

A Message from the President

(Continued from front)

—A dear friend of MCF gave a generous gift that allowed our five students who are awaiting college placement to take an in-depth computer class that results not only in excellent computer skills but also a certificate-of-completion that strengthens their future resumes. —Our core volunteers: Francis in Kenya and Mary Jo and Ed in America continually dip down into their deep reservoirs of creativity to problem-solve and instigate new programs.

—Our sponsors and donors amaze us with their generosity toward children most of them will never meet. The messages of encouragement they send, their great questions and their sensitively worded suggestions have helped us be better at making this Foundation run with both love and efficiency.

If you are reading this, you have played a part in our success. From the bottom of my heart, thank you!

"Easter was our crying time ..."



That's how one Makena student described the mood in Kenya a few days after the terrorist attack at Garissa University in which 148 people were murdered. So many of you contacted us in the days following this horrific act to affirm that no Makena students attend Garissa and to express your solidarity with and love for the Kenyan people. We are so grateful for your wishes and prayers for understanding and peace. As one of you said, "May we all awaken to the preciousness of each life and live from this knowledge moment to moment."

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MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.
711 Medford Center, #117
Medford, OR 97504
Phone (541) 826-2553

annebatzer@aol.com
www.makena.org

Anne Batzer
President & Co-Editor
annebatzer@aol.com

Mary Jo Baich
Vice President & Co-Editor
mbaich7@earthlink.net

Tina Wilson
Graphic Designer
tunat@bellsouth.net

Sherri Mills
Founder & President Emeritus
sm595@bellsouth.net