

Changing  
the world  
one  
child  
at a time

# MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

Winter 2005 Vol. 6, No. 3

## JAMBO



### A Message from the President

Foundation  
President  
Sherri Mills

### GOOD NEWS

**Good news from Peter Muigai,** who says he has withstood his chemotherapy without too much difficulty, and will soon receive a CT Scan that will reveal how well the therapy has worked. He is confident he will receive a good report.

An insect has destroyed almost all of the passion fruit plants in Kenya. Peter and Jane are very disappointed as they were expecting to make a profit on this year's crop.

Peter's son Ruoro Muruthi is graduating this month from Starehe School for Boys. Ruoro is working on university and college scholarship applications in the US. We believe he will receive one. Keep your fingers crossed!

As you may know, Jane and Peter's son, Muigai, is studying on a partial scholarship at Wesleyan in Fulton, MO. He has already experienced the legendary storms of the Midwest. By now, heading for the basement must be a common ritual!

Although it takes courage to send their sons so far away, Peter and Jane are determined to give them every opportunity to make the most of their talents. We wish them the very best.

### GOOD SPORTS

This summer I was able to visit with the Virginia Beach, VA, Thalia Lynn Baptist Church's Pairs and Spares Sunday School class at a covered dish dinner. They were very pleased to hear how happy the village school children were to receive the hundreds of dollars of sports equipment bought and donated by the class to Shindano and Manunga primary schools.

Peter, young Muigai and I caused quite a stir at both schools as we unloaded the equipment, which included soccer balls, dodge balls, other specialty balls, pumps and pins, jump ropes, Frisbees, Whiffle balls, bats and bases and more. The kids were thrilled to receive the soccer balls, as this is their favorite game of all. Even without television, they know of national and international soccer teams and players.

*(Continued on page 2)*

## A Young Heart's Desire

By Mary Jo Baich

If your greatest desire was to learn, can you imagine the joy that comes to Margaret Nyokabi's heart when through the Makena Children's Foundation and the generosity of her sponsors, Dr and Mrs John McGuire, Margaret receives her most treasured gift? Of course, life takes many twists and turns for one to achieve a desired goal, as Margaret knows all too well.



Margaret was born October 7, 1988, and is the youngest child of five sisters and two brothers. Her father died early in life and her mother died when Margaret was only 6 years old. Her siblings live in a group of several small, humble dwelling places in the village of Mariaigushu and she lives with them when school is not in session. Her two brothers finished grade school in 2001, but there was no money for them to finish their education or for her sisters to get schooling.

Margaret's intelligence and willingness to learn made her a standout at the village school and so the Makena Children's Foundation and St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Birmingham, Alabama, gave seed money for Margaret to attend Elite School, with the agreement that a permanent sponsor be found for her.

Bobbie Clayton, a 15-year walking partner of Pam McGuire's, went on safari in Kenya three years ago, and Makena Children's Foundation Vice President Peter Muigai was her guide. Bobbie was soon hearing of Peter's passionate hope to educate the children of his far flung village. Bobbie said "yes" to the call and sponsors Isabel Muthoni. Upon Bobbie's return home, she enlisted the help of Pam and John McGuire. It is no surprise that the McGuires signed on to this shared dream.

The McGuire, long time residents of Whitestation, New Jersey, are committed to giving back to others. Besides raising their two daughters they supply to Peter all the diabetic medications and supplies he needs to keep his disease in check. John is chairman of the hospital foundation board and is also the vice president of their city's community college. Pam says, "Providing an education to Margaret was a golden opportunity for them to help another person." Margaret fits this description and grows in the light of this opportunity.

Margaret Nyokabi is a tall, quiet and beautiful young woman. All who meet her use the word, "focused." She loves school and excels in math and science. Margaret's poise makes her comfortable in most situations and she possesses more confidence than most children her age.

In talking to Peter about Margaret, he not only praised her abilities but said that she has everything it takes to obtain what her life's goals are and right now that goal is to become a doctor. Margaret had the highest score of all female Elite students (and all Makena children) who took Kenya's Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) test last year -- achieving 449 points out of a possible 500 points on the exam.

"During semester breaks, Margaret helps her siblings with housework or takes care of her young nephews," Peter relates. "She is the only child to walk the considerable distance from her house to our home two or three times during the month-long break to tell us how much she appreciates the opportunity she's been given. She told me, 'Please tell the McGuires that I am working hard and I want them to come and visit me.' Margaret has already achieved more education than any of family members ever have and she is only a freshman in high school."

Margaret's goal is to finish high school and college and have a life's work. She is well on her way to fulfilling this heart's desire.



### MAKENA Musings

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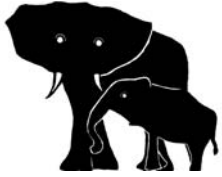
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# MAKENA Musings

Winter 2005



MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.  
4138 Crossings Lane  
Birmingham, AL 35242

*The Foundation has MOVED. If you've not already done so, please make note of our NEW address above!*

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

Dear Friend,

A winter sky often blazes with the cold but dazzling light of countless stars. Sometimes we are even lucky enough to catch the sight of a shooting star as it crosses the heavenly expanse. Pondering this wondrous beauty, we often make a wish.

Our children of the Makena Children's Foundation are stars too, beautiful ones shining with hope and promise. But to bring them to dazzling fulfillment they need an education, clothes, toiletries and guidance. Your generous dollars bring these stary dreams to reality.

Your gift of \$1200 dollars gives a child a year's education complete with room, board, tuition, uniforms and the required personal items. It also includes a gift of food staples for their families at Christmas time.

Even smaller donations of \$35, \$55 or \$100 dollars helps us bring to these children a chance to continue their most cherished dreams of being educated and self-sufficient. These gifts change lives, giving hope where there was none.

No shooting star will ever match the delight that comes from educating a child. Help us launch yet another star in Kenya!

Sincerely,

*Mary Jo Baich*

Mary Jo Baich, MCF Director

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



# More than Coincidence

By Anne Batzer

## It's a long way from Birmingham, Alabama to Nyahururu, Kenya.

But for Mary Ellen Calhoun, a routine trip to a Birmingham beauty salon turned into a unique opportunity to connect with Samson Machohi, the Kenyan child she sponsors through the Makena foundation.

Mary Ellen was leaving the salon when she overheard a manicurist turn to assistant, Ruth Mburu, and ask her if she was excited about her trip home. This piqued Mary Ellen's curiosity. "I asked Ruth where 'home' was," she says.

Ruth told Mary Ellen that she would leave the next day for Kenya. It was Ruth's first trip back to visit relatives in six years, and the first trip ever for her sons to meet extended family members there.

"I told Ruth about Samson and asked her if she had ever heard of the Elite School where he is a student," Mary Ellen says. Ruth told Mary Ellen she knew exactly where the school is. In fact, she would be traveling right by the campus since her husband had relatives in Nyahururu where the school is located.

For Mary Ellen the whole experience felt like more than just a coincidence. "Children have been my life," she says. A speech pathologist with a master's degree in special education, Mary Ellen has taught children, with a variety of challenges, from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

"Something has been drawing me to Africa for several years now," she says. Two years ago she began sponsoring 13-year-old Samson.

"Here I was in this luxury salon environment and I find this woman who is leaving the next day to go over and visit Nyahururu," Mary Ellen marvels.



*Samson Machohi meets Ruth Mburu's family. Samson is to the left of Ruth. Ruth's two sons and husband stand to the left of Samson. To the far right and left are Ruth's brothers, who live in Kenya.*

Mary Ellen asked Ruth if she would be willing to visit Samson and deliver a gift of \$25 to him. Ruth was delighted to be the messenger.

When she returned from her trip, Ruth told Mary Ellen that her family waited at the Elite school for an hour until Samson could be brought to meet them. Ruth described their visit with him as "real sweet."

Shortly thereafter, Mary Ellen received a "thank you note" from Samson telling her the money was being kept in the school office for him and that he would gratefully receive it when he goes on break to spend time with his grandmother and brother.

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## President's Message *(Continued from front)*

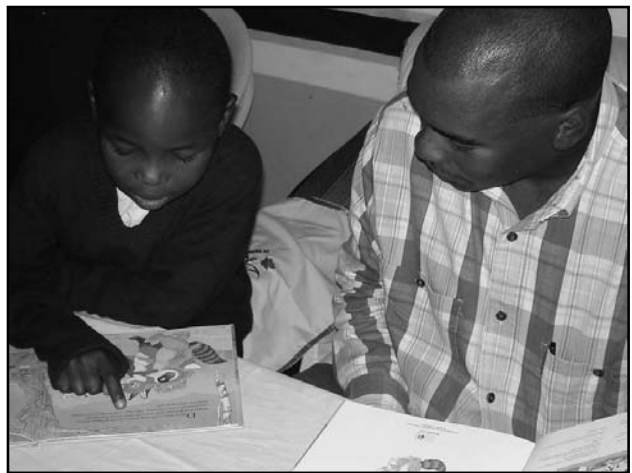
Of course, the girls quickly grabbed jump ropes and began jumping to rhyming songs just as our girls do here. *(See photo on page 3.)* The Whiffle Ball set was entirely baffling, as they know nothing of baseball. After a quick demonstration by Peter's son Muigai, one of the young boys gave it a try. He hit it "out of the park" on the first try!

The Frisbees also caused a lot of head scratching. After close examination, the students shook their heads and asked me what the Frisbees were for. I tossed the round disk one time and everyone "got it" immediately. So at this point, we had soccer balls moving up and down through the long grass of the field, jump ropes making their rhythmic turns to the chanting of little girls' voices, Frisbees being tossed and caught over the heads of the soccer players and Whiffle balls being hit in all directions.

We had a wonderful time, as did the students. And, I must say, the school administration was very indulgent of our interruption of the day's activities. They were very grateful as well. A few days before I left to return to the US a package arrived for me from Mununga Primary School. In the package was a letter of gratitude from the headmaster, scores of thank you notes from the children and dozens of colorful hand-drawn pictures showing how the equipment would be used.

Sharing the pictures and "thank yous" with the members of the Pairs and Spares Sunday School class was a joy. My regret remains that they could not

be in Kenya to see the excitement, happiness and gratefulness generated by their love and generosity.



*Makena Children's Foundation Vice President Peter Muigai looks on as young Makena student John Muiruri demonstrates his reading skills.*

## Kenyans Scheduled to Vote on New Constitution

By Anne Batzer

As we assemble this newsletter, Kenya's 11.8 million registered voters prepare to go to the polls to cast ballots on a proposed new constitution. Voting was scheduled for November 21.

This would be the first complete overhaul of the country's constitution since its charter was written on the eve of independence from Britain in 1963. Since then, the constitution has repeatedly been amended by the government, giving sweeping powers to the president. In March of 2004 a National Constitutional Conference (NCC) with broad representation completed a proposed new constitution recreating the position of prime minister and reducing the powers of the president.

However, the document before the voters is a revised version of the NCC proposal, re-written by President Mwai Kibaki's administration. Some argue it retains too much presidential power. The country's cabinet is split on its support, with members criss-crossing the nation sharing their opposing views. Demonstrations, sometimes violent, have been organized in the country's urban centers.

Human rights organizations, civic groups, religious leaders and some politicians have asked for a delay in the voting. However, at this writing, the balloting is scheduled to take place. Foreign monitors, including the United Nations, have been called in to oversee the election process.

# Ruoro's Story of Hope

By Mary Jo Baich

**O**ur Makena students mostly come from the small village of Maraigushu in the Abadare Mountains of Kenya and usually begin school when they are quite young, but the words "mostly" and "usually" would not describe the story of Makena's, Ruoro Muruthi. Nor is it a coming of age story either, though Ruoro accomplishes that too.

So captivating is Ruoro's story that Barbara (Bobbie) Clayton, in addition to sponsoring another child, Isabel Muthoni, in the Makena Children's Foundation program, set out to write Ruoro's story for all of us to know. It is a riveting one!

Ruoro begins life in western Kenya with his father, mother and sister. They are of the Luo tribe and they live a comfortable life on their farm surrounded by their tribal community. Tragically, when Ruoro is 12 years old and his sister Lucy is 10, their parents are killed in a car accident. Life for the children changes forever.

Relatives separate the children and Ruoro's fortune descends from grief to abuse. Eventually he escapes and takes to the streets to seek a different path.

Bobbie's book chronicles these sad and challenging years, but eventually this young man catches the attention of Jane Muthuri, the wife of Peter Muigai, the vice president of the Makena Children's Foundation. As they come to know Ruoro they are impressed with his remarkable intelligence, his artistic talent and his mega watt smile. They recognize that he has a never ending desire to be educated.

It is a wonderful read and you will find yourself pulling for Ruoro all the way. You, and all of us at Makena, will continue to follow this young man's story for many years to come because the tale is far from completely told. The book entitled, THE HOPE WITHIN, will bring you up to date on Ruoro's life. We at Makena will keep you informed of his continuing story.



*The Makena Children's Foundation (MCF) and Bobbie Clayton would like to share this book with you. All sponsors will be gifted with this book in December as will anyone making a donation to MCF by December 31, 2005. Or you will receive a copy of the THE HOPE WITHIN for a donation of \$15 dollars or more or for \$50 you can receive 5 boks. Ruoro's story makes an excellent stocking stuffer and an inspirational gift for all ages. It is also a wonderful way to introduce someone to the Makena Foundation story. To order, please see the return gift form below.*



**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 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 .
- Enclosed is my donation of \$15 per book for a total of \$\_\_\_\_\_. Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ copies of THE HOPE WITHIN.  Enclosed is my donation of \$50; please send me 5 copies of THE HOPE WITHIN.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_