

Changing
the world
one
child
at a time

MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

Spring 2006 Vol. 7, No. 1

JAMBO



A Message
from the
President

Foundation
President
Sherri Mills

GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS

There is good news and bad news to report from Kenya. The bad news is the drought that is causing famine in many parts of Kenya (read more elsewhere in this newsletter.) But, the good news is very, very good. As most of you know, Makena vice-president Peter Muigai has been receiving treatment for cancer. Peter's physician has declared him disease free. Peter is grateful for all the prayers, letters and emails he received during his illness, and says he found great encouragement in your support.

Some have asked how Peter is doing with his diabetes and there is good news there as well. He seems to be staying regulated with his current insulin regimen. Pam and John McGuire, who sponsor student Margaret Njokabi, have provided Peter with all the necessary diabetes supplies to monitor his blood sugar since he first became insulin dependent. Thank you, John and Pam. We all appreciate your generosity.

PARENT/GUARDIAN COMMUNICATION

When I visit Kenya we always hold a meeting that includes all of the parents or guardians of the children we are sponsoring. It is an upbeat social occasion as well as a serious business meeting. If the meeting is set when the children are on holiday, the children attend, too.

We cover all the things that are going well with the project and also spend time on individual or group problems. It's a chance to get the information we need to improve the project and also a chance to mediate problems, and require accountability from parents and guardians. We also talk a lot about the accountability the parents and guardians must require of their children.

One of the issues with which we struggle is that the parents don't encourage the children to continue to study during holidays. Our headmistress at Elite has told us that some children take a very long time getting back into the swing of things when they return from holiday, because they do not study at all during the month to six weeks they are at home.

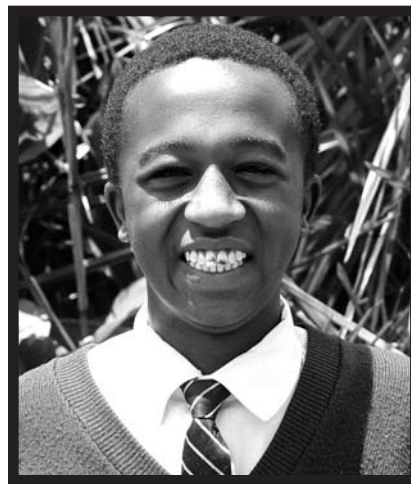
In some homes there is a great need to have the children help in the house and shamba (garden). Although we can certainly understand the needs, we are encouraging the parents to also make time for the children to study.

(Continued on back)

A Special Young Man, A Special Sponsor

By Mary Jo Baich

Meet Peter Njore, one of Makena Children's Foundation's most likeable and talented students. Peter is tall, handsome and oh, so smart. Life dealt him a hard blow when he was only four years old. His father was patrolling a large commercial vegetable farm near the Kenya-Tanzania border. One terrible day he was brutally shot and killed as gunmen stole the Land Rover he was driving.



Peter has 5 brothers, a sister, and is the second youngest of his siblings. When he became school-age, he attended the local village school and, early on, showed great promise with his excellent grades. It was not long before Peter Njore came to the attention of Makena vice-president Peter Muigai.

Back in the United States, Makena president Sherri Mills met Teri-E Belf as part of her training to become a success coach. Teri-E is an accredited life coach trainer who has written four books sharing her expertise on this subject. Teri-E and her husband Phil Nelson, who is retired, live on a lake in Reston, Virginia. Teri-E says she has always given her time and money to charitable causes but she was searching for an experience that would add real meaning and purpose to her life, and to someone else's life, too.

The first day the two women met, their conversation turned to the Makena Foundation. The very next morning Teri-E gave Sherri a check for educating a child for a year. Teri-E is someone who believes that the more you give, the more you receive. This is certainly the case in her relationship with her sponsored student, Peter Njore. Not all of the children have the ability to really bond with someone from another culture, race and background, but Peter and Teri-E have developed a strong and loving relationship that is close and rewarding to both of them. They share long, quarterly letters detailing their lives, hopes and beliefs. When Teri-E and Phil's son got married, Peter confided to both Teri-E and Sherri how upset he was for missing this important occasion in his sponsors' lives. He poured himself into making a card that sent his love and blessing to their son and his bride. Peter is so close to his sponsor that when he addresses his letters to them he adds the Belf surname to his own.

Teri-E describes Peter as honest and authentic. She says he is a committed young man with the maturity to self-reflect. He is eager to please and committed to his faith. Teri-E says she already knows that Peter will make a meaningful contribution during the course of his life.

Both Teri-E and Sherri commented on his loving nature and his ability to connect with people. Although hugging is not a common gesture in rural Kenya, Sherri says that Peter always runs to hug her. I, too, concur that there is something very special about Peter. His name brings a ready smile to my face.

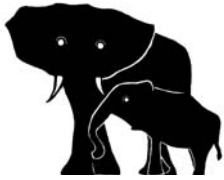
Sherri remembers the time she first met Peter and his mother, Eunice Njeri Muriti. Sherri and her husband Bert were in Kenya in early 2000 and met them at their first Makena parent/guardian meeting. Although Peter was small for his 12 years of age and very shy, his handshake was strong and he looked directly into her eyes. Peter was the only child not wearing the school uniform that day, as he had not yet started at the new school. Sherri says, "I won't forget the moment I met Peter Njore because of the hope reflected in his eyes. I watched this awkward adolescent as he searched for his place in the new group." A couple of days later Sherri and Bert met up with Peter and his mother again while the two of them were buying last minute supplies for school. Both Peter and Eunice walked directly up to Sherri and Bert, shook their hands and tried hard to communicate. "I was touched by their courage and grace," Sherri relates.

Peter has a most supportive mother. In the Kenyan culture women can often lose control of their adolescent boys. But Peter Muigai says that Eunice has held on to that control and not allowed Peter to run with the wrong crowd when he is home on holidays. Eunice also takes on responsibilities for the Makena students in general. This year she is serving as the parent coordinator, arranging for the transportation for the children to-and- from school at holidays and for parents/guardians to travel to the school to visit their children once a quarter. She also coordinates the parent meetings and organizes the buying of the required school supplies provided by Makena scholarships.

Life for Peter is as it should be, for he has the complete and loving support of his sponsors, the backing of all those in the Makena Children's Foundation and, especially, the devotion of his mother and siblings. This was the hope of Makena, what a pleasure to see it take seed in Peter Njore!

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MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.
4138 Crossings Lane
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If you'd like to sponsor or help sponsor a Makena student, please complete the form below and send your donation TODAY to the Foundation at the address above! Your gift will be greatly appreciated!

President's Message (Continued from front)

At our last meeting, a few of the parents who are the most educated agreed to "tutor" the children at least once during the holidays. They divided the children by age groups and planned to gather separately during the holiday.

It was interesting to watch the synergy of the group as they figured out together how to solve a problem. My sister, a first grade teacher, has rallied other teachers at her school to provide worksheets for multiple grades and multiple subjects, so that I can take lots of worksheets for the tutors to use. Thanks so much to Jeani Price and all the other teachers who helped at Greenwood Elementary in Lee's Summit, Missouri.

You also may be interested to know that we have a contract that our parents and guardians sign. Parents/Guardians are required to meet the requests of the Foundation, attend Prize-giving Day, encourage their child and underscore the importance of education and the opportunity they have been given, meet Peter's requests in a timely manner, visit their child at least once during the term, and others. If you'd like a copy of the contract, call me or send me an email at: sm595@bellsouth.net.

The Parent/Guardian meeting is a highlight of my trips to Maragushu. It is a chance to get to know these people as

individuals, a chance to be inspired by their hope, faith, hard work and good will. And, it's a chance to eat the wonderful Kikuyu food, so full of fresh vegetables. I actually miss many of the dishes when I come home. Jane, Peter's wife, is an excellent cook and sees that I am nourished by many delicious local favorites. I try to cook them here in the USA, but they are never as good!

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks go to Mary Ellen Calhoun who has bought and filled our goody bags so all the children will have a small bag of surprises, American style, when we visit them. Mary Ellen has shopped for the last two trips and won't allow me to reimburse her.

Thanks, too, to Saint Luke's Episcopal Church of Birmingham who held a flip-flop drive that brought in hundreds of flip-flops for men, women, girls and boys in all colors and styles. Flip-flops are very utilitarian shoes for Kenyan life. The ones with sequins may not be as practical, but they will certainly put smiles on some little girls and ladies' faces! I have two 29-inch suitcases packed to bursting to deliver to our friends in Kenya. Thanks, St. Luke's, for all the many things you have done for our project.

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Recurring Drought, Recurring Problems

A searing drought, described as the worst in twenty years, is once again bringing suffering and hunger to the Kenyan people. The Washington Post reports that at least 40 people have died from famine-related illnesses. In the north and east of the country, a third of children under 5 are malnourished, triple the usual number in those regions. The area's herds of livestock--the life-support system for most families--have fallen by 70 percent in some places, leaving a frightening omen: the carcasses of more than a quarter-million cows, goats and even the usually hearty camels rotting in the sun.

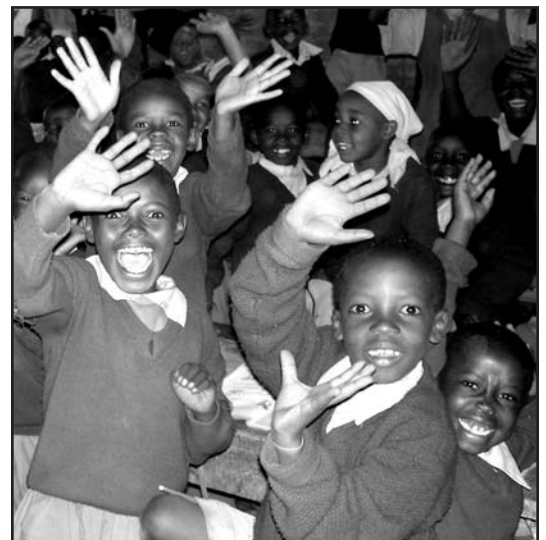
Other wealthier countries, the United Nations and aid organizations are scrambling to provide crisis intervention. We need to support these groups in getting food and water particularly to the very young and the very old, who are always the first to suffer. A swift, sweeping response is needed. But something more is required of us. We need to support Kenyans in breaking the cycle of thirst, hunger and death caused by recurring droughts. We need to support the efforts for long-term solutions.

At the Makena Children's Foundation we believe that education will allow Kenyans to implement their own vision for a more sustainable economy, clean water, irrigation, electricity and roads that will leave them less vulnerable to the horrible suffering brought on by their country's arid climate cycles. When we support a child in school, we support a child in becoming part of the long-term humanitarian solution.

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 .



Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ e-mail _____