

Changing  
the world  
one  
child  
at a time

# MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

Winter 2011 Vol. 12, No. 2

## JAMBO



### A Message from the President

Foundation  
President  
Sherri Mills

You probably received many items in your mailbox on the day this newsletter arrived. Christmas cards, holiday party invitations, sales on holiday gifts and much more. I am so hoping that you will read this newsletter and this message from me even though it is a very busy time for all of us.

When I worked for the American Heart Association and Children's (Hospital of) Alabama, I received excellent staff training on the many aspects of fund raising. One thing I remember is that in a study done on why people don't give to a cause, participants answered, "Because I wasn't asked."

Today, I am asking. We both know that the answer can be "No." I write with great hope that those of you who can do so will answer "Yes."

We have 11 children who completed secondary school in late November. Some these students are bright, will receive high scores on the Kenyan exam (the KCSE) and with government help will be able to enter a university some time next year. These, along with other of our graduates, will someday be Kenya's leaders.

Several of these children will not score high enough on the exam to be accepted by a University. However, they will score high enough to be accepted to colleges where they can receive certificates (equal to our junior college degrees). There are many good teaching vocational courses in cosmetology, hospitality, computer science and business. There are degrees for pharmacy techs and mechanics as well. Our children must receive training to be employable in Kenya.

These courses (and living expenses) cost between \$500 and \$1,000 a year. We need your help in funding these fees. You can pay all the fees for a child; pay the extra "living" or "personal items expenses" for a college student. Also, with your gift you could pay for a student's transportation to and from school; or your \$50 gift could be combined with monies from other donors to pay any or all of these costs. No gift – NO GIFT – is too small to help.

These students all have worked hard. They have understood the importance of the opportunity they have received and are deeply grateful for what you have made possible. Please help us continue to reward and support their discipline, determination, courage and hard work.

All gifts are important, large or small. Gifts move our efforts a little faster. The large gift, or the combination of many small gifts will bring us to the same goal – finishing the work we have begun with these precious lives.

*(Continued on back)*

## Feline Friendship Bonds Makena Sponsors

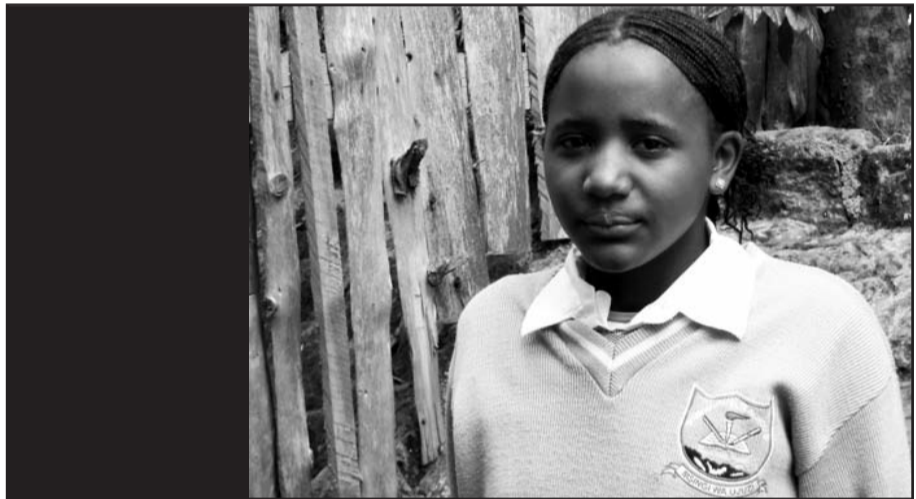
By Mary Jo Baich

It all began because of a blue-eyed Siamese cat named Sebastian.

As they like to relate, the friendship and 26-year business relationship of Chris Metcalf and Sharon Burdette is all that cat's doing.

At about the same time, Makena student Peris Njeri Gitundi (pictured below) was in need of a new sponsor.

Peris, who is now 17, had become a part of the Makena Children's Foundation in 2003 because a



Chris, a British citizen, was working in Charleston, South Carolina, when he became friends with Sharon's brother, Bill Culverhouse. When Chris moved to Birmingham, Alabama, he took over a business that required frequent travel. His cat did not fare well during these leaves of absence so Bill suggested his sister, Sharon, also a Birmingham resident, might be just the person to look after Sebastian.

Sharon, a college student at the time, was glad to lend a hand. Working a cat into her schedule was an easy accommodation.

Sharon finished her finance and accounting degree, and Chris' steel brokerage firm grew. He asked her to manage accounting for his company and they have been working together ever since.

Chris explains that his company brokers byproducts from the manufacture of steel and iron, reselling them to firms that manufacture new products. "Years before it was considered green to recycle, it was just good business," he says. The business now takes Chris and Sharon to many interesting locales, including Nevada, California and Brazil, to name a few.

About six years ago, Sharon was deeply moved by an article in *The Birmingham News* describing the work Sherri Mills was accomplishing in Kenya with the Makena Children's Foundation. During the course of the next business day, she mentioned to Chris the article and her desire to help. Chris shared her enthusiasm and, on the spot, suggested they become co-sponsors of a child. He also realized he knew Sherri's husband, Bert Brosowsky, and set up a meeting to discuss the details.

family gave a one-year sponsorship honoring an elderly man. Some of Brosowsky's relatives were able to pick up the sponsorship for two more years. When Chris and Sharon were matched with Peris in 2006, their generosity meant that her education would continue uninterrupted.

Peris' family includes her widowed mother, Rahab Wambui, and four siblings. After her husband's death in 1996, Rahab supported her family by farming her small piece of land and tending several cows. In 2002, armed thieves robbed her of her cows. The family was devastated. "They (the cows) meant everything to me and my family," Rahab says.

The Makena Children's Foundation support of Peris' education gives Rahab hope for a brighter future.

Though small in stature, Peris has a big heart and a personality to match. An accomplished musician, she enjoys playing in the school band. Her sponsors, Sharon and Chris, recently received a letter of thanks from Peris.

And what about Sebastian? The Siamese who brought Chris and Sharon together lived happily into his old age.

Although a number of cats have been adopted at their work place, not one reminded Sharon and Chris of that special feline that cemented their relationship – until recently when a blue-eyed stray strolled into their company.

So, once again, a Sebastian is sharing the lives of Chris and Sharon. We, at Makena Children's Foundation give thanks to Sharon and Chris for their joint sponsorship of Peris.

# Looking for Resources

By Anne Batzer

Educational support is behind the times. In our fast changing world with its global economic challenges, college-level education or vocational training is often required for gainful employment. Even in countries like Kenya.

For several years, I've been researching NGOs (non-governmental organizations) looking for foundations who fund post-secondary education (college or vocational training) for students in developing countries. What I've discovered is that foundations are nearly all focused on funding elementary education or – in a few cases – post bachelor's degree training (such as training for physicians in specific procedures.)

There's a gap in worldwide educational support for students in the developing world.

We are so proud of our dedicated Makena Children's Foundation sponsors. They have persevered to fund our students through secondary school. Almost every single one of our children has responded by studying hard, fulfilling their promise and individual potential. Many of our students have excelled and received "Best of..." awards and invitations to Kenya's top-rated secondary schools. This is an extraordinary accomplishment considering they are in competition with middle and upper-class Kenyan students

who have had opportunities for enriching experiences that enhance their education.

Most of our high school graduates have done so well they are enrolled in Kenyan universities or colleges. This is possible for two reasons: First, if a Kenyan student scores a B+ or above on the KCSE – the exam given to all Kenyan seniors – the Kenyan government awards a partial college scholarship. And second, in some cases, sponsors have demonstrated incredible generosity by providing a level of support for these college students.

As Sherri Mills says in her President's message, we have students graduating from high school who we do not expect to get a B+ on the KCSE. So they will not be eligible for governmental support for college. Even though their scores will not be as high as other students, most have demonstrated disciplined study habits and a willingness to work hard and continue learning.

We are committed to these students' future and are currently looking for corporate or individual support for this vocational training. Our goal is to raise \$28,000. Can you help us? Do you know of foundations, corporations or individuals we might approach for meeting this important goal? If so, please email us at [sm595@bellsouth.net](mailto:sm595@bellsouth.net). Thank you!

## Recommended Reading



At the Makena Children's Foundation, we were saddened to learn of the death from cancer of Wangari Maathai. In 2004, Maathai became the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Her lyrical memoir, *Unbowed*, recounts her fascinating odyssey of planting both trees and democratic ideas in her beloved Kenya. In what seems a fitting tribute to her vast legacy, shortly following her death, three other African women were awarded this year's Nobel Peace Prize.



## FUN DAYS AT SCHOOL

*Clockwise from upper left: John Muiruri (left) and Simon Mwangi (right) pose with the dynamic band leader of Elite School's Marching Band.*

*Outstanding student Mary Muthoni Wairimu with Alliance Girls' School Principal Dorothy Kamwilu.*

*Mr. and Mrs. Waitbaka celebrate Elite School's 30th Anniversary with a cake made by students. Students baked enough cakes for everyone attending Prize Giving Day to share in the celebration.*



# December

December is a month filled with holidays that celebrate the worlds of imagination and reality. At the Makena Children's Foundation, it was imagination that conceived a question: "What can we do for the children of Kenya?" And you joined us in imagining a new, exciting reality for children and their families in Maraigushu.

One of the definitions of reality is "an independent absolute from which all else derives." Because of your generosity, more than 40 children are striding along the path of education. We can only imagine what this "reality" will mean for their futures, their families and their country.

And so, we thank you. We thank you for your financial support, your letters, your trips to visit your sponsored child and the encouragement you offer to this Board.

We also appreciate your willingness to focus with us on our current reality. As this issue of *Musings* elucidates, we clearly need your imagination, your ideas and your financial support to help our students transition from school to jobs. Please help by making a generous end-of-year gift to the Makena Children's Foundation.

## ... the joy of giving the dream of a life-changing education.

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 .

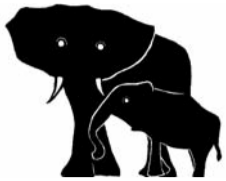
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4138 Crossings Lane  
Birmingham, AL 35242

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.



## Meet Our Graduates!

*Pictured above are Elite Secondary School graduates. From left, Mary Gatuku, Rose Waithira, Rachael Njeri, Simon Mwangi (Form 2), John Karanja, Simon Gatonye and Samson Machobi. Other graduating students not pictured are: Mary Muthoni Mwangi; Rosemary Njoki; Isabella Muthoni (Wellspring Girls School); Stephen Mungai (Gilgil Good Shepherd School); and Joseph Kariuki (Mang'u High School).*

## President's Message (Continued from front)

Please give our request serious consideration. Think about the money, think about all the things you could use the money for yourself, and think about all the deserving causes we all know of, then determine if this isn't a great place for your money to make a BIG difference. Guaranteed results!

For me, "Making the ask" is the hardest part of fund raising. Actually, the worse that can happen is that you will say "no." I respectfully beseech you to say "yes."

Merry Christmas and Happy Chanukah to all of you who have made this journey with us, supporting our children in so many important ways. We are forever grateful.

There is a form in this newsletter that you can use to send with your gift. We can also accept donations through PayPal on our website [www.makena.org](http://www.makena.org).

### MAKENA Musings

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MAKENA Children's  
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4138 Crossings Lane  
Birmingham, AL 35242

Phone (205) 980-6861  
e-mail [sm595@bellsouth.net](mailto:sm595@bellsouth.net)

[www.makena.org](http://www.makena.org)

Anne Batzer  
Co-Editor  
[annebatzer@aol.com](mailto:annebatzer@aol.com)

Mary Jo Baich  
Co-Editor  
[mbaich7@earthlink.net](mailto:mbaich7@earthlink.net)

Tina Horton  
Graphic Designer  
[tunat@bellsouth.net](mailto:tunat@bellsouth.net)

Sherri Mills  
President  
[sm595@bellsouth.net](mailto:sm595@bellsouth.net)