



Changing
the world
one
child
at a time

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MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

Spring 2002 Vol. 3, No. 1

JAMBO



Foundation
President
Sherri Mills

A Message from the President

As the years pass, I continue to be amazed at the ripple effect of our effort in Kenya. An effort that started with one single family wanting to make a difference for one child has grown to support and encourage hundreds of children and involve many adults in Kenya and the United States.

Some of you may remember that in a past newsletter I wrote about how little light there was in the village school that most of our Makena students had attended earlier in their academic careers. I told readers that the school formerly was a barn used for drying pyrethrum – a dark windowless structure with no electricity for lights. I talked about the difficulty to see the chalkboard and wondered how the children could see to read their books. In the article I was contrasting what it was like to go to the village school as compared to attending the boarding school where Makena students were enrolled.

When I was in Kenya last year I visited the school again with Ruoro Muruthi and Mary Gatuku, two Makena children, to pass out much needed pencils to the students. (See photo, bottom right.) I noticed the rooms were brighter and when I looked for the source of light, I saw my first African skylight! Later in the day I learned from a wonderful man, the school's equivalent of our PTA president, that the construction of the skylights had been a village effort spurred to some extent by the article in the newsletter. The village had raised money to buy the supplies and the men of the village had installed the skylights.

It was so clear in this man's eyes that these people want to meet the needs of their children -- just like we want to meet the needs of ours. But they have SO many fewer resources. The things we take for granted are often major struggles for these people. I continue to be edified and inspired by their hope and creativity.

I also learned of a man who has stepped forward to serve as liaison to the Foundation for one of our orphaned students. He is not the father of this girl, but was once married to the girl's mother. Last year the mother died of AIDS. This man came to Peter and said, "If someone in the U.S. can love this child enough to

(Continued on back)

Makena Student Ranks Seventh in Nation

Ruoro Muruthi's score on the Kenya Certification exam ranked 7th in the nation. The highest score made was 451 out of 500. Ruoro's score was 451.

Many of you will remember that just two years ago Ruoro was a "street kid" in Naivasha. He was orphaned after his parents died in a tragic road crash. After a couple of years of living on the streets, sleeping in ditches in a plastic bag, Ruoro came to the attention of Jane Muigai, wife of our foundation vice president, Peter Muigai. Jane noticed that Ruoro was eager to do errands and help out in any way he could so that he could buy food for himself. He told her, "I will not eat from the garbage. I will earn my food." She also noticed that he was not involved with dope and glue sniffing, as were many of the street boys.

Peter thought Ruoro might be a good Makena sponsorship recipient because he was exceptionally bright and yearned for knowledge. Once when Peter asked Ruoro what was his future, he replied, "I have no future, because I don't have an education."

Although the school was reluctant to interview or test him because they had not been successful with other attempts to educate street children, they finally agreed. Ruoro began a seven-part test, and by the time he had finished three parts – English composition, math and science- he had scored so highly that the school agreed to give him a chance. By the end of his first year at Oasis Junior Academy he was the Prefect of the school and had received outstanding student awards in almost every subject. He was at the top of his class, many points ahead of the second ranking student.

Last winter Ruoro moved to the new school, and found a greater academic challenge awaiting him there. But Ruoro was up to the challenge, and in a more competitive environment he rose to a higher level. Only one student at the school scored higher than Ruoro on the Kenya Certification Exam.

Foundation President Sherri Mills said, "Ruoro was so excited when we talked to him by phone. He told me that he gave all the credit for his success to God, and asked me to thank his sponsors for giving him this opportunity."

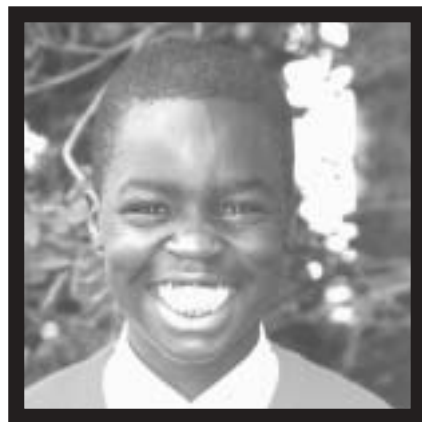
"We are so proud of him and look forward to supporting him as he continues to realize his dream to be an electrical engineer," she said.

"It is obvious that Ruoro's parents had done an excellent job in the early training of this young man," said John and Arlene Edwards, Ruoro's sponsors. "He survived a difficult experience through determination and strong character and, when given an opportunity by Makena, he made more than the most of it."

Jane and Peter Muigai adopted Ruoro, so now he has a mom, dad, two brothers and a sister. He has much for which to be thankful – a wonderful curiosity, exceptional intelligence, a clever sense of humor, a deep faith and a delightful personality. And most of all, he has a family who loves him very much.

Ruoro has been accepted at one of Kenya's most prestigious secondary schools, Starehe in Nairobi. In this setting he will continue to excel and reach his considerable potential.

Congratulations, Ruoro! You inspire us all.



Makena students Mary Gatuku and Ruoro Muruthi pass out Children's Health System (Birmingham, Alabama) pencils at Shindano Village School.

MAKENA Musings

SPRING 2002



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



Makena Scrapbook

Clockwise, from top: Makena students with Foundation Vice President Peter Muigai in the fall of 2001; Rose Waitihira (left) and Isabel Muthoni with Bibles given by Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church; our 25th and newest student, 5-year-old Joseph Njoroge; Elite School Head Mistress Keziah Waitihaka; and George Kamura, who is sponsored by the Church in Gulf Breeze.



President's Message *(Continued from front)*

sponsor her in boarding school, then surely I can take some responsibility, too." He now represents Mary Nyambura in parent/guardian meetings and sees that her personal item and school supply needs are made known to the Foundation.

Another ripple effect we're seeing is the children themselves understanding and appreciating what is done for them. On my last trip the Foundation Board sent me with gift bags for each child containing inexpensive items like chewing gum, pens, pencils, candy, peanut butter crackers and one small toy. It was not a bag that would have excited most of the children I know here at home. But the Makena kids were delighted and explored the goody bags with curiosity and excitement. George Kamurwa, then only 8 years old, stopped when he opened his peanut butter crackers. He carefully placed one peanut butter cracker on the fingers of his open, upturned hand, extended his hand to me, and said, "Welcome, Makena." I was deeply touched that in this moment, he thought of me. Mungai Mbugu, then 5-years-old, watched this exchange with great interest. He turned back to his own bag, placed a piece of Juicy Fruit on his hand, extended his hand to me and repeated, "Welcome, Makena." That was the best peanut butter cracker and tastiest piece of chewing gum I've ever had. I'm happy to see that the older children of this Makena family are good role models for the younger children.

Judy Close of Hillsboro, OR, gave a great gift to the children of the village school. She paid for the printing of 500 workbooks. A workbook is a number of empty, lined pages (newsprint quality) bound with a paper cover used for the children's school exercises. It is what we would call a notebook. Such an unremarkable item in our culture, and such a precious commodity in theirs. The whole school was assembled for the ceremonial distribution of these workbooks.

Thank you to Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church in Gulf Breeze, Florida for the gift of children's Bibles to the Makena Children. GBUMC sponsors one of our children, George Kamurwa.

By the time you receive this newsletter we will have 24 children enrolled in Nyahururu Elite Junior School and one enrolled in Starehe Secondary School. Twenty-five children on an education adventure that can change their lives.

Thank you to all of you who have made this possible through your support and encouragement.





Dear Friend of the Makena Children's Foundation,

Thank you for your interest in needy children in Africa and your concern for their education. Because of you, the number of children we support has grown by leaps and bounds.

In February 2001, I personally visited our 13 eager students at their school. When I return to Kenya this month, I will check on those 13 children and meet 12 new children who enrolled this school year. Our total now is 25 bright, curious students whose lives and whose village will be changed forever. Thank you for caring enough to make an impossible dream come true.

Also, I am proud to tell you that your gifts are being used wisely. In 2001 only 12.5% of the dollars we received went toward fundraising and administrative cost. That means that 87.5 cents of every dollar we received went to educating children. . . Our hard-working, volunteer board is very proud of this figure, since new guidelines released by the Council of Better Business Bureaus states that a percentage of up to 50 % for administrative and fundraising costs is acceptable.

Now 5 of our children need your help.

These children had sponsors in 2002, but will need a caring donor to sponsor them in 2003. They are Margaret Nyokabi, 13; Simon Nguni, 11; Lucy Muthoni, 10; Rachel Njeri, 10; and Simon Mwangi, 6. All 5 are very special and have made such wonderful progress in school.

Will you help sponsor Lucy or maybe one of our Simons? Or Margaret or Rachel? If you are already a sponsor, an extra gift would greatly help or do you know someone who might be interested in becoming a sponsor?

We have enclosed our latest newsletter. I hope you will enjoy reading about our kids and the success they are having. Then I hope you will decide to send your tax-deductible donation today. Any gift...large or small...will make a difference.

Sincerely,

Sherri Mills
President

P.S. We are truly making a difference in the lives of these children. And we need your help to ensure their dream continues. Send your gift today and pass along our newsletter to another caring friend or family member.

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MARGARET



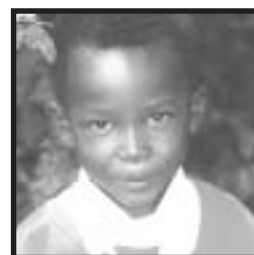
SIMON N.



LUCY



RACHEL



SIMON M.

Yes, I want to help change the world -- one child at a time.

Please accept my tax-deductible gift, payable to MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc., 2248 Garland Drive, Birmingham, AL 35216.

- 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.

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ e-mail _____