

Changing
the world
one
child
at a time

MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children’s Foundation, Inc. Spring 2017 Vol. 18, No. 1

JAMBO



A Message
from the
President

Anne Batzer

Light the candles! Close your eyes! Make a wish! Cut the cake! It's the **twentieth anniversary** of the Makena Children's Foundation.

It's time to celebrate the sweet partnership of Americans and Kenyans that bridges our differences in geography, politics, culture and development. This partnership thrives because of the simple fact that holds and unites us: Our common humanity. It's time to celebrate the American sponsors who have modelled loyalty, generosity and LOVE over all of these many, many years.

More than 50 children from an African subsistence farming area have been — or are becoming — educated. We know of no more sustainable path out of hunger and poverty. And we know of no better way to honor the bond each of us feels with our own families' children than to extend this connection to all children.

It's time to celebrate our donors who annually send us \$10, \$20, \$100 or \$1,000 to cover all the extra costs that inevitably arise when educating active, curious, healthy children.

It's time to celebrate our Founders and bow our heads in thanks to the two folks who met by chance on Safari way back in 1995. Sherri Mills, an American raised in the South during the Civil Rights years, devotes her life to helping children of all nationalities. And Peter Muigai Muruthi, a Safari guide, attained his profession only because education had lifted him out of a desperately poor childhood.



When Sherri observed the poverty in tiny Kenyan villages, she asked Peter a simple question, "What do the children need?" Peter replied with one word, "Education." They forged a way of working together to benefit these children. Little did they know that 20 years later these Makena students would work together to benefit other, younger children.

(Continued on back)

It takes a community ... Selecting Our New Students

By Anne Batzer

Finding new students to join the Makena family is a community project. Our Manager, Charles Karanja, works with teachers in the village elementary schools and a committee of Kenyan elders to identify these special children.

We are looking for students whose families could never afford a good education for their child. So we have chosen to include into our foundation orphans or children having only a single parent. Teachers in the public schools identify young children with academic potential that meet this family criteria. Then, the elders in our students' home village of Maraigushu get to know the families and make a recommendation.

Sometimes we are asked why we take children out of the village elementary school and place them in Kenyan-run boarding schools. Village elementary schools are so underfunded that few, if any, students pass the test at the end of eighth grade that qualifies them to go on to high school. Kenya follows the Old English model of education, so all good public and private schools are boarding schools.

Our two newest students both live with grandparents in Maraigushu. We introduced Teresita Kabura (*in photo at right*) to you in the last issue of Musings. Four years ago she was living with her parents and her brother in Nakuru. After Teresita's father died, her mother moved to Nairobi to work as a maid. Teresita and her brother went to live with their grandparents in Maraigushu. Teresita's mother sends what money she can to the grandparents to help support the children.



Pictured with Teresita is our newest student, Mary Nyokabi. While both of Mary's parents are living, each is missing one leg. Mary's father is a shoemaker who lives with his wife and 3 of his 5 children in Namanga near Tanzania. Mary and one brother live with her grandmother in Maraigushu. Mary's father is able to send about \$10 a month to help support the children.

The girls are both in Class 4 at Lizar Schools in Naivasha. We have chosen this school because of its academic excellence, but also because staff joins us in paying close attention to students' emotional needs.



When Makena President Anne Batzer met new student Teresita Kabura,

she asked her this question, "Why do you think you were chosen to attend a new school?"

Teresita said, "Because I have a single Mom."

Anne said, "Lots of children have a single Mom. That's not it!"

Teresita thought for a very long minute, then said, "Because I am the brightest girl in my class!"

She got it!

“Educating a woman is educating a whole nation.”

By Mary Jo Baich

We proudly celebrate the college graduations of several Makena Children's Foundation students this year. One of them, Rachel Njeri Nganga, completes her Nursing degree in May.

Rachel is committed to social change and firmly believes that educating Kenyan girls provides them and their families with the most sustainable path out of poverty. To this end, she has dedicated her studies to family planning and plans to spend her career working with girls and women to give them the knowledge they need to make educated choices.

Rachel wisely says, "Educating a woman is educating a whole nation." This statement echoes the findings of international studies that reveal that educating girls in a developing country positively impacts the health and vitality of not just their families, but their entire communities and the world.

In addition to her nursing studies, Rachel is just completing a special month-long course. The class called HIV Testing and Counseling, will qualify Rachel to work with a Kenyan national committee that develops the policies for the implementation of high quality HIV testing and counseling services. The committee's mission is to reduce the HIV rate in Africa. Completing this course should open up interesting, important job opportunities for her.

Rachel's education has been funded by her generous sponsors and grants from our gracious partner, the Innocent Eyes Project (innocenteyesproject.org).

We look forward to sharing the stories of all of our graduates with you in this newsletter and on our Facebook page. Inspired by the unselfish support of their sponsors, our students are finding creative ways to pay it forward. We are humbled by their success and their commitment to bettering themselves and making life better for others.



ABOVE Rachel Njeri takes part in a recent medical outreach in Suneka in Kisii County. Organized by her school, Kenya Medical Technical College (KMTC), activities at the project included treatment of minor ailments, health education and referral. The KMTC students and staff also distributed malaria test kits. An additional purpose of the outreach was to make the community aware of medical services, since some people still rely solely on traditional, herbal remedies.

Like us on Facebook

By Mary Jo Baich

Our Facebook page is alive and lively, thanks to our new multi-tasking and ready-to-help volunteer. Meet Alex Batzer, who not only juggles a busy schedule, but posts once-a-week news of the Makena Kids at work and play on our Facebook page. To see Alex's postings, go to: [Facebook.com/MakenaChildrensFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/MakenaChildrensFoundation)



Alex has always had a yen for partnering with other cultures. She graduated with a degree in International Studies from Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. Following graduation she served a tour of duty with the Peace Corps in remote Paraguay. Alex now resides in Portland, Oregon and is employed by Green Hammer, a construction company specializing in Net Zero Energy buildings, which produce as much renewable energy as they use. She is a Project Engineer for the construction of custom homes and community buildings, in both Oregon and Washington, including the beautiful Cowhorn Vineyard and Gardens in Southern Oregon.

Alex is revving up those study skills and taking the GMAT in May so she can apply to Willamette University's MBA graduate program. In what little free time she has, she enjoys running, attending concerts and perusing the lively international food scene in Portland.

Coming Soon: Another Joyous Celebration

By Mary Jo Baich

Put your hands together to celebrate the May 5th graduation, for his doctoral degree, of former Makena student, James Muruthi. Our long time subscribers know him as "Ruoro," although he now goes by his first name, James.

You may recall reading his riveting history — including the devastating years after his parents' death, when he lived as a homeless boy on the streets of Kenya, followed by the years when generous Makena sponsors insured James received an excellent education — in both our Spring 2002 and Summer 2012 newsletters (go to makena.org).

Now we pick up his remarkable story on the eve of his graduation. On his own initiative, James immigrated to America for college. He received his Bachelor's degree from Miami University in Ohio. Then, he worked as a research and teaching assistant at the University of Georgia while doing class work for his Ph.D. James wrote his dissertation on The Effects of Acculturation on the Mental Health of Aging Latino and Asian Immigrants: The Role of Social Capital.

While writing his thesis he was a van driver for disabled students attending the university, a job he thoroughly enjoyed. As he related to me, this opportunity gave him new insights into the courage and determination they showed in overcoming the difficulties of life. James could surely relate to them. He passed his dissertation defense in February, bringing together his interest and knowledge in both gerontology and public policy. Now it's on to the big day!

Meanwhile his wife, Bertranna, has already obtained a similar doctoral degree in Human Development of the Family Unit and is teaching at Virginia Tech University. Stay tuned to follow where James and Bertranna's talents and skills take them in the coming years.

If you would like to send a card of congratulations to James (either now or near his graduation day), please mail them to:
James Muruthi, 2846 Katherine Paige Lane, Apt. 305, Falls Church, VA 22024



In need of the basics



Our newest student, Mary Nyokabi, has seamlessly transitioned from her grandmother's home in Maraigushu to her life as a boarding student at Lizar Schools in Naivasha. After two weeks at her new school, she was asked, "What do you like best about your new school?" Without missing a beat, she said, "I get enough to eat!"

Mary echoes the heartbreaking response of most of our new students.

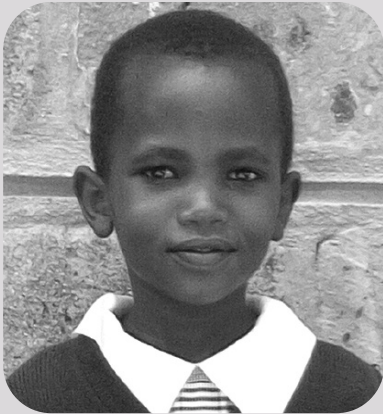
Our mission is education, but our carefully chosen boarding schools pay close attention to a growing child's nutritional needs. And meeting these needs immediately improves each child's health and grades.

Your support transforms a young life. Please consider a tax-deductible donation today.

Transform a young life ...

Please consider sponsorship for a child that is waiting for your help. If sponsorship is beyond reach, please consider a donation. Because we are all volunteers, overhead is extremely low, but sponsorship funds do not cover all of our costs.

Make your tax-deductible donation TODAY, payable to Makena Children's Foundation, Inc.,
711 Medford Center, #117, Medford, OR 97504.



- ☐ I wish to sponsor a Makena student 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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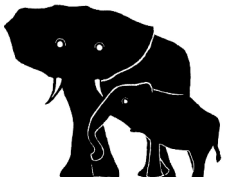
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Celebrating 20 years!

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Spring 2017



MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.
711 Medford Center, #117
Medford, OR 97504

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.

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A Message from the President (Continued from front)

It's time to celebrate our Kenyan staff, brothers Charles and Francis Karanja, who bring the rare combination of both wisdom and humility to this work. They continually keep us awake by educating us in traditional Kenyan customs and values. They work with our students in ways that hold up the highest standards of great expectation and, yet, respond with sensitivity to emotional needs.

Finally, it's time to celebrate each of our students: The Makena Kids. They delight us with their resilience, their intelligence, their persistence, their charm, their humor, their empathy and their hope. We've learned something vital and important from each and every one of them. Every day they give us new reasons to continue with this joyful task.



Something to (AMAZON) SMILE about

When you order items through Amazon or Amazon Prime, you can give a small donation to Makena Children's Foundation each time you shop by setting up an Amazon Smile account.

1. Go to smile.amazon.com and log in using your email and password as if you were at amazon.com.
2. Select the Makena Children's Foundation as your charity.
3. Shop. Amazon Smile will remember the charity you selected and will always donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to us. Please always make sure that you are logged into smile.amazon.com (not Amazon.com) when you are making purchases.

We promise to stretch these pennies far in Kenya! Thank you for this support.

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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
mjbach7@earthlink.net

Tina Wilson
Graphic Designer
tunat@bellsouth.net

Sherri Mills
Founder & President Emeritus
sm595@bellsouth.net