

Changing
the world
one
child
at a time

MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

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JAMBO



A Message
from the
President

Anne Batzer

Initiative—that's the theme for this newsletter.

In our last issue we highlighted a few of our dynamic young women who are finding jobs to support themselves in ways that express their values.

In this issue we share a couple of stories of our inventive young men who are demonstrating an amazingly mature level of taking the initiative. And we take a look at some of our youngest students who radiate the inventive spirit of children everywhere.

When I sit in on classes at our students' schools I am always impressed at the extraordinary efforts of the teachers. They work so hard to make sure each student is "getting it." They obviously care deeply about their students' and their country's future.

They know that education is the key to lifting so many of their countrymen out of poverty and bringing Kenya into the modern world. To accomplish this goal, the Kenyan educational system consistently rewards conformity. The old English method of teaching is widely practiced. This means the teacher lectures and students memorize. Tests require students to answer questions exactly as taught. School uniforms and strict rules reinforce compliance.

So, why do our students grow into young adults who display such a high level of initiative? We need look no further than their parents and guardians who have formed the Makena-Kahuruko Self-Help Group (Please see photo, bottom right.).

As you read the article about them, remember that the average educational level of these villagers is third grade. Jobs, sometimes available at commercial farms, pay about \$2.00 for a full day's hard labor. They live without running water and electricity. Yet, they have worked together for several years to raise money, decide how to spend it, wait for their turn to benefit and resolve their conflicts. Their initiative serves as a powerful role model for the Makena Kids—and for all of us.

Inspiring Others: Joseph Njoroge

By Mary Jo Baich

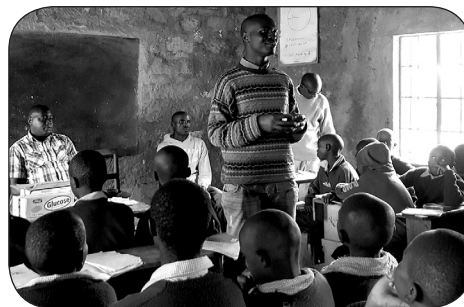
"Farming is my passion," says Joseph Njoroge.

Hearing this, a big smile crosses my face. How satisfying to pursue higher education to seek gainful employment, but how wonderful when our students can also satisfy their deepest passions and find purpose in life.

This passion is already paying off for Joseph. On long weekends when classes are over, he returns home to lend a hand on the family farm in Maraigushu. Best of all, he says, when he returns to school he takes back with him fresh-from-the-farm produce including milk, potatoes, onions, lemons, oranges and bananas to supplement his pantry.

One of four children, Joseph is the second born of two boys, with two younger sisters. Joseph is very proud of his mom, a single parent with a disability. Joseph says she is the source of his encouragement. He loves to quote his mom who has taught him: "Disability is not inability."

Joseph has been a member of the Makena Children's Foundation since the first grade. After graduating from high school, he was selected to attend Egerton University where he is pursuing a degree in Agribusiness Management and Economics. Joseph describes himself as practical in all ways and, with his education, he wants to work to solve a good many of Kenya's agricultural problems. He lists his concerns over Kenya's disappearing forest cover and the unmet food needs of this rapidly growing population as challenges he wants to remedy. He also plans to work on reducing the time it takes to get crops to market and ending the harassment that middle men present to farmers. With more space, I could share even more of his to-do list. It is impressive.



Makena Board member Susan Reinecke describes Joseph as "a natural leader, with poise and compassion." She observed him speaking to nearly 100 boys in 6th through 8th grades at Mitamaiyu Primary School. Joseph volunteered to give a motivational presentation to these students in the subsistence farming village of Maraigushu where they all

reside. He says the title of his talk was "Un-leashing your potential, having great dreams for the future and, most of all, having purpose in your life."

Joseph's dedicated sponsors are two women who've been good friends since college, Dr. Susan B. Miller of Ann Arbor, Michigan and Judith Saltzman of New York City. With the advent of the internet, Joseph's relationship with his sponsors has become more personal. Dr. Miller relates that Joseph's emails express his passion and commitment to his and his family's future. She says this gives meaning to their sponsorship. "I am very curious to see what direction Joseph's life will take," Dr. Miller says.

And so are we!



Forging His Own Path: Samson Machohi!

By Mary Jo Baich

Not many students get a paid internship in Kenya, but this did not stop Samson Machohi from beating those odds and obtaining a year’s internship with the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO.) Samson is doing what he loves best: research and data collection.

Sam joined the Makena Foundation in 2002 after the death of his single mom; more tragedy followed with the death of his sister in 2002 and a brother in 2017. Through it all, his grandmother and uncle have been his support team. Sam also strongly counts the support of his Makena sponsor, Mary Ellen Calhoun, for encouraging him to believe in himself.

After grade and high school, Sam received a scholarship to one of the highest rated universities in Kenya where he obtained a Diploma in Business Information and Technology. Then he studied at Multimedia University graduating in 2017 with a B.S. in Information Technology.

With diligence and perseverance, Sam landed his internship at KALRO, an organization that deals with research on all livestock and agriculture in Kenya. Specifically, Sam is collecting data on Kenyan greenhouses for their scientists to analyze. He says the work is tough and challenging, but fulfills his passion to be a “guru in my database field.” Next up, Samson is already figuring out how he might study the Oracle Databases to complete his on-going education in IT.

When he can, Sam loves to travel up-country to visit his grandmother, hang with friends or visit children’s homes. He is committed to sponsoring at least one young student as a way of giving thanks for the education he has been given through the Makena Children’s Foundation.

Sam’s sponsor has been with him for 14 years. A former Special Education teacher, Mary Ellen Calhoun saw the need to open doors for Sam as he found his way from village life to the hustle and competitiveness of completing a quality education in Kenya. With the advent of computers in their lives, they immediately began communicating. They have a deep relationship, often sharing family stories and important life lessons. Sam says he could not have accomplished his educational track without Mary Ellen. And Mary Ellen joyously relates how proud she is of Sam as she awaits the day when they can meet and “I can hug his neck.”



Samson Machohi catches up with Makena President Anne Batzer. Anne says, “Samson is always up to something interesting!”

Thank You, Scott!

By Sherri Mills, Makena Founder and President Emeritus

The Makena Children’s Foundation has accepted the resignation of Scott Swedenburg from our Board of Directors. As Scott moves on to other projects, we wish to thank him for his many years of service to our organization as a charter member of our Board of Directors. His involvement began before we incorporated, drew up bylaws or applied for nonprofit status.

Scott had been to Kenya many years before I made my first trip. He told me that the trip changed his life. When I returned from Kenya, I told him the trip had changed my life, too. There were many good discussions as the dream of the Foundation began to take shape.

Scott, who has expertise in marketing, fundraising and printing brought knowledge and much needed talents to the Foundation. He and his family sponsored a child from 4-years-old through high school graduation. I came to greatly respect him as a professional, a community advocate, volunteer and a man of faith, who lived his beliefs. We are grateful for his servant spirit and for his generous support of the Foundation and the precious children we serve.

Scott, you will be missed.



A Life Changing Project



Group leaders Johnson Kamau and Joseph Kamau (no relation) show their pride when the water tanks arrived in their village, Maraigushu.

Several years ago some parents and guardians of our students formed the Makena-Kahuruko Self-Help Group. The group became official when they registered with the Kenyan government. Meeting once a month, each member chips-in a small dues at every meeting. The group has built its coffers by giving micro-loans to each other and charging interest. Money from the micro-loans has been used to cover the basics. Most of these families have used the funds to buy food.

Earlier this year, with well-deserved pride, the group launched its first major project. Identifying the need for clean water as their top priority, they purchased 10 3,000-liter tanks and installed them at members’ homes to collect rainwater off of roofs. The tanks are expected to function for 30 years. The 10 members who received the tanks were chosen by a lottery system. The group is now working on raising the funds to purchase tanks for the additional 13 members.

The family members who received the tanks report that the tanks have been “life changing.” We could not be more proud! Their success is a deeply moving example of the power a group has when they work together with initiative, honesty, perseverance and good will.

A Pilgrimage to Help the Makena Kids

When Makena Board of Directors Secretary Brenda Morgan met her husband Ken, one of their first dates was hiking the Grand Canyon—from the south rim to the bottom and up in one day. Since then, the Texas couple loves the exercise of hiking together and the experience of being up close and personal with nature.

So, their planned trip to Spain’s Camino de Santiago in October will, of course, be a hiking trip. Because their time is limited, they hope to cover about 100 miles of the famed pilgrimage route. “Neither of us has been to Spain and walking the trail gives us the opportunity to hike into small towns and villages along the way, learn the history and absorb the culture,” Brenda says. This treasured route, a focus of spiritual pilgrimages since the middle ages, will take Brenda and Ken from O’Cebreiro to Santiago de Compostela. They hope to hike the entire route from France to Spain in the future.

“We’ll pass through many hamlets dotted along cultivated land in the direction of the great river Mino to Portomarin. We’ll go through the farming region of Ulloa. The trail has pine groves and eucalyptus trees that sound just beautiful,” Brenda says.

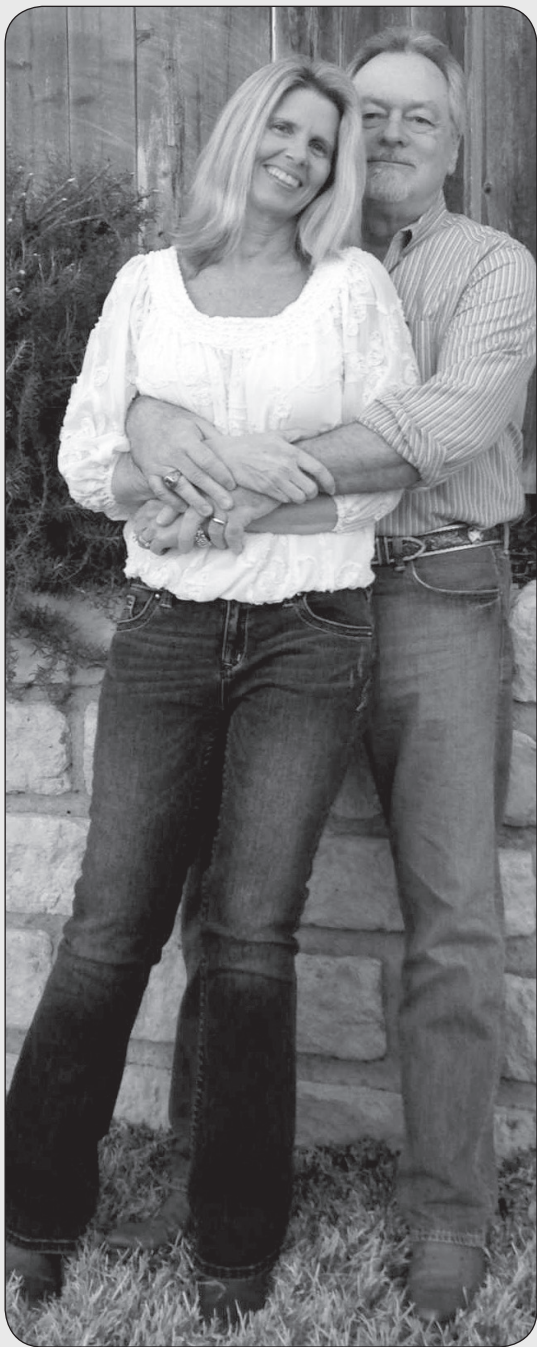
But this is not just a walking trip. Brenda and Ken are truly making this a pilgrimage. They are devoting this experience to the Makena Children’s Foundation. “If our walking trip can go towards helping young Kenyan children improve themselves through education, it’s an incredible positive,” Brenda says.

Sponsorships do not cover all of our student’s expenses. So we are asking you to make a pledge to donate to the Makena Children’s Foundation.

Brenda and Ken will blog about their progress. To read the blog, go to www.makena.org after October 18.

Will you join Brenda and Ken and make a per-mile-pledge to donate to the Makena Children’s Foundation? Or pledge a total amount in support of their journey? One dollar per mile would mean you send a \$100.00 donation. Five dollars per mile adds up to a \$500.00 gift. Or consider a total donation of your choice.

Make your tax-deductible pledge or donation TODAY, and send to:



Makena Children’s Foundation
711 Medford Center #117
Medford OR 97504



IN SUPPORT OF BRENDA AND KEN'S HIKE:

- ☐ I want to pledge \$_____ per mile completed.
- ☐ I would like to make a gift of the total amount checked below:
☐\$50 ☐\$100 ☐\$200 ☐\$400 ☐\$600 ☐\$1,000
- ☐ My check is enclosed!

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY/STATE/ZIP_____

EMAIL ADDRESS_____

PHONE NUMBER_____

Our Young Ones: In Their Own Words

By Anne Batzer

Holding a conversation with a group of our youngest students is like popping popcorn in a pan without a lid. The lively exuberance spills out everywhere. We are so fortunate to have our students boarding at Lizar School in Naivasha. It's difficult to imagine a more positive learning and growing environment. As new student Mary Wanjiku said, "It's so beautiful here. When I first saw this school, I became happy." Another student, Mary Nyokabi, added, "The teachers here teach so well!"

When I asked them what it means to aspire to "be a Lizarian," they all joined in the conversation, calling out in quick succession: it means one is "honest, faithful, trustworthy, obedient, confident, courageous, smart, humble, respectful, disciplined!" Not a bad list for a group of 4th-6th graders.

The academics are impeccable at Lizar School. Teresita Kabura said the teachers "encourage you and help you solve problems." Collins Kamau said his social studies teacher "makes everything interesting." And Brian Karanja said his Kiswahili teacher is his favorite because of the humor he injects into every lesson.

The students have chores to keep the environment clean and beautiful. Rotating lists in the classrooms require them to sweep floors, clean blackboards, empty trash cans and complete a host of other maintenance activities.

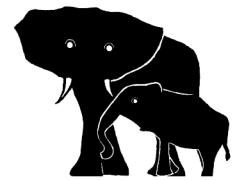
But, of course, it is the extracurricular activities that the students love to talk about. All mentioned enjoying playing soccer and said learning to swim has been a highlight. Teresita is in the Drama Club and the school's traveling troupe won competitions at the County and District levels. Two of our boys said music is their passion. Brian plays the guitar and Collins is learning the piano. Eric Waithaka said he likes anything that feeds his imagination, "especially drawing and painting." Mary Wanjiku and Mary Nyokabi love participating in the Dance Club.

Goals for the future? Teresita hopes to be a doctor. Collins' goal is to compete as a world-class gymnast. Eric thinks architecture is in his future. Brian aspires to be an engineer. And Mary Wanjiku and Mary Nyakobi say they hope to be pilots (perhaps because their class had just completed a field trip to the airport) for the best of reasons: "so we can visit other countries."



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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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Welcome, Susan Reinecke!

We are delighted to welcome Susan Reinecke (shown here with our Kenyan management team, Charles and Francis Karanja) to the Makena Children's Foundation Board of Directors.



With over twenty years in the field of education, Susan has worked in and with private and public schools, colleges and universities and non-profit organizations across the United States.

She has taught at both the University and Community College level and has held multiple leadership roles within the educational system.

Susan earned an Educational Masters (EdM) in Human Development and Psychology from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. An avid lifelong learner, Susan's background also includes a Masters in Fine Arts (MFA) in Interdisciplinary Arts from Goddard College and a Master in Education (MEd) in Theatre Education from University of North Carolina.

As a Societal Advancement faculty member for the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, Susan designs and delivers leadership solutions for K-12, Higher Education and non-profits that include both short term experiences and systemic initiatives.

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MAKENA Children's
Foundation, Inc.
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
mbaich7@icloud.com

Tina Wilson
Graphic Designer
tunat@bellsouth.net

Sherri Mliis
Founder & President Emeritus
sm595@bellsouth.net