

Changing
the world
one
child
at a time

MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

Fall 2015 Vol. 16, No. 2

JAMBO



A Message
from the
President

Anne Batzer

"You are a Kenyan," the school administrator, Simon, said as he pointed his finger across the desk at me. I joined him in laughing at his comment—my skin looking whiter than ever under the overhead light—but my heart hoped his words were at least in part true.

His comment came after I shared some of my observations of Kenyan education. I was relieved and happy to know he thought I understand the way things work. I still have much to learn about Kenyan culture, but what I know I have learned from the truly special partners who join me in this work.



Pictured above at left is Charles Karanja, our Kenyan manager, who approaches every situation from a heart filled with deep compassion. Because he grew up in the subsistence farming village of Maraigushu where our students live, and because he lost his father at a young age, as many of our students have, his empathy comes from an authentic place. He knows what it is to be a child living steeped in poverty, with little hope for a different future.

But Charles credits Makena Founder and President Emeritus Sherri Mills with teaching him to be a strong leader. From Sherri he learned that mentoring our students means sometimes delivering difficult news and raising the bar high. He's perfected the art of responding with kindness and, yet, expecting only the best in academic performance and behavior. Charles' youth belies his wisdom. Our students know they can go to him with problems at home or school. This very personal relationship is key to our students' astonishing success.

Charles' older brother, Francis, is pictured at right. *(Continued on back)*

"Such Beautiful Visitors"

By Anne Batzer

Mary Carol Day and I have been friends since the day we met when we were just eight years old. So, ten years ago when she and her husband Tom offered to sponsor a student through the Makena Children's Foundation, we were all delighted that they were assigned to sponsor Mary Muthoni (pictured below, far right), the neighbor and best childhood friend of the girl we sponsor, Alice Njoki (below, second from left).



Mary Carol and I have had such fun, over the years, watching "our" girls grow up and witnessing their life-long friendship which mirrors our own.

She accompanied me on my recent working trip to Kenya. A retired teacher, Mary Carol brought amazing expertise to all of our experiences. Her insights, ideas and suggestions strengthened every discussion. Her understanding of the value of education and her love for students imbued the trip with depth and heart.

Although she is well-traveled, Mary Carol had never been to Africa. Her astonishment and distress at the extent of the poverty in Kenya is an important reminder to all of us of the value of this work we do together.

In her own words, here is Mary Carol's description of her time in Kenya:

How can I adequately explain what a fantastic experience I had as a Makena sponsor coming with my life-long friend Anne to beautiful Kenya? How can I express the happiness I felt meeting all the wonderful Makena students, especially Mary Muthoni Warimu who my husband Tom and I have sponsored since she was ten years old?

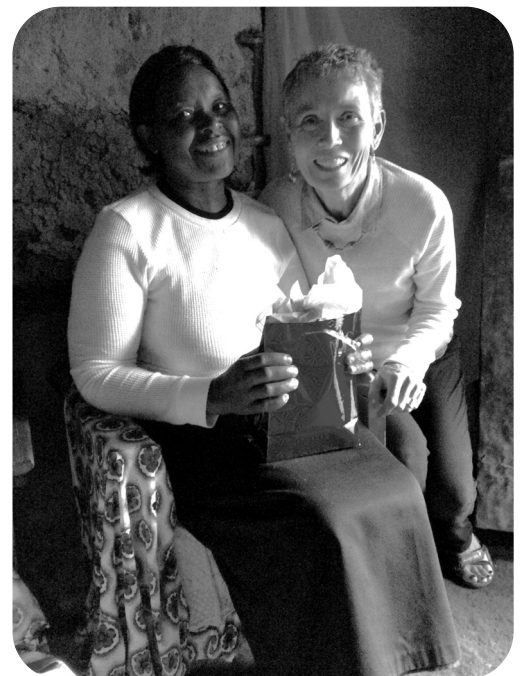
What a delightful, intelligent young woman! She has just completed her first year at Machakos University where she is majoring in Mathematics and Computer Science. She, like all our MCF students, is the future of Kenya.

What joy it was to meet Mary's mother, Monica, (pictured in photo at right, holding gift) and her family as well as all the wonderful parents and guardians in Maraigushu. Like parents around the world, they want only the best for their children. My heart soars as I remember their hearty handshakes and hugs, their wide-open smiles, and lines from their welcoming song, "...who has seen such beautiful visitors?"

And how do I thank Anne, Francis and Charles for including me in all their discussions regarding MCF? They made me feel a valuable and valued member of a team. Speaking of a team, I am so impressed by the individual talents all three bring to the table. They share a mutual respect for each other and a shared belief in what is best for MCF. Their holistic approach to addressing every student's needs guarantees success, as each child is acknowledged and honored.

My trip to Kenya exceeded all my expectations. The memories I have of the land, the traditions and the people continue to resound in my mind. I feel humbled and privileged to have been a part of this amazing journey. Our students and their families give me hope for the future of Kenya.

In addition, Anne's, Charles' and Francis' dedication, hard work and genuine care and concern for our students make me, and Tom by extension, proud to be Makena sponsors.



Curtain Soon Going Up for Real Life Jobs

By Mary Jo Baich

Dress rehearsal for a real life job is what six of our Makena Kids have been experiencing these last few months. After years of schooling, our students are doing internships in their field of study and they are relishing the practical experience.

Solomon Wanyoike is in Nyeri working at the Kenya Veterinary Investigations Laboratory as part of completing his degree in Veterinary Medicine at Nairobi University.

Samson Machohi is working in Kericho at James Finley’s Limited, an international company growing tea and flowers. Samson is studying Information Technology at Kenya’s Multimedia University in Nairobi.

Kimani Daniel has completed his studies at Mt. Kenya University and did his student teaching at Muhuri Muchiri High School in Ruai. Kimani majored in education with special emphasis in teaching Swahili and History. For him the highlight was accompanying his students on a visit to Kenya’s Parliament and getting to meet some of the Parliamentarians.

Simon Gatonye attends Egerton University in Nakuru. He is an education major with emphasis in Literature. Simon did his student teaching at P.C.E.A Jitegemee School.

Simon Ngure has completed his Bachelor’s Degree and is enjoying his internship at Crowne Point Ltd., working in his field, Information Technology.

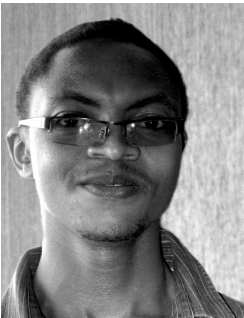
Simon Mwangi is in Narok doing his internship at Maasai Mara Lodge. Simon is studying hospitality and tourism at Kenyatta University in Nairobi. With a passion for photography, Simon spent his free time photographing the abundant wildlife. He shared some of his photos with Makena graduates and they marveled at the pictures of the stately lion. Many of our students have never seen a lion in real life.

Simon put his feelings into these words: “MCF and my wonderful sponsors, Jim and Judy Adams, have turned me from a boy who was once hopeless to a young man who now believes that the sky is the limit.”

All these kids started out living in one small area of Kenya and now, with their ongoing education, their lives have taken roads they never imagined. Thank you to our donors for making this wildly diverse journey possible. The curtain soon goes up for their real life jobs.



Solomon Wanyoike



Samson Machohi



Kimani Daniel



Simon Gatonye



Simon Ngure



Simon Mwangi

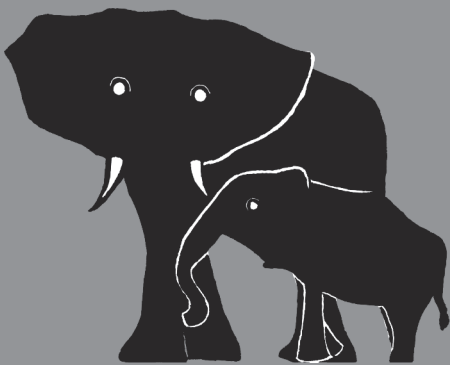
Transforming Simon’s Life!

By Mary Jo Baich

A love of children and a commitment to seeing kids get the best education possible is what binds all who read this newsletter!

It is a pleasure to connect with others who share this same life mission. Sabrina Young and her fellow club members of the Kiwanis Club of Inverness in Birmingham, Alabama are such kindred hearts. They have sponsored Simon Gatonye’s education from his elementary years through college. Their loyalty has brought Simon from poverty to being an educated man ready to educate others. Simon has only to finish his student teaching assignment and graduate from Egerton University with his diploma in education in December. What an accomplishment for both Simon and the Kiwanis Club of Inverness.

Sabrina Young, who heads up the committee in overseeing Simon’s education, is committed to loving children unconditionally. Sabrina married her high school sweetheart Daniel. They have two boys and a young granddaughter in their family circle. Sabrina works for the Southern Company, the parent company of Alabama Power, as do a number of other club members.



Although not large in numbers, this Kiwanis Club provides a lot of loving care to the Birmingham community including extending a hand to the needs of the Owens House, whose mission is to heal and end child abuse. These members also provide a helping hand to the Boys and Girls Ranches of Alabama, a group that provides assistance to kids who have an unsuitable home life. Members also round up books for kids and go to local schools to read. These folks sure do express their love for children!

Our thanks to the Kiwanis Club of Inverness for transforming Simon Gatonye’s life. Best of all, Simon now has the means and opportunity to transform the lives of those he educates!

IMPOSSIBLE

What incredible fun to share time with our alumni and college students at the June meeting of the Makena Alumni Club! Talking with them is like talking with highly educated young people the world over. They are brimming with ideas, eager to explore their theories, curious about the world, proud of their country but acutely aware of her challenges, and full of a sense of humor. They demonstrate remarkable initiative and an entrepreneurial spirit. They also share a commitment to working together to educate other Kenyan students. It's energizing just to be in their presence.



Transformational

But remember where these students started out. Most grew up in mud and dung homes, with no electricity or running water, like this home of Grace Njeri, a mother who raised her seven children alone since her husband's death seventeen years ago. Please contrast the photo of the Alumni Club with these photos of where our students live when they are not at school. Most surely, education is the most sustainable path out of this poverty.



It is no exaggeration when we say your support transforms lives. Donations supplement the costs of our students who have partial sponsorship. We could not keep these students in school without your help.



Please consider making a 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 \$1,000 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 ☐.

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ e-mail _____

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Extracurricular Excellence!

Nyahururu is known as the hill town where famous Kenyan marathon runners train. But two of our students at Elite School there are making their mark as sprinters. Both Hannah Virginia (left) and Christopher Kidali (right) excel at the 100 meter race. Other students enjoy various extracurricular activities. Two love music: John Muiri plays the French horn in the band and Hannah Njeri sings soprano in the choir. David Maina plays Defender on the soccer team and enjoys tracking hippos with the Wildlife Club. Older students Naomi Mwangi and Joseph Njorge participate in the Presidential Award Club, doing public service at a local orphanage.



Congratulations, Graduates!

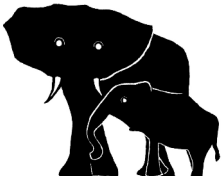
We recently celebrated the graduation of five of our Makena students from secondary school. We could not be more proud of these accomplished young people. All are poised to continue their education at institutions of higher learning.

Johnson Kamau scored a stunning B+ on the comprehensive test given at the end of secondary school, the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) exam. He has been invited into the Bachelor's program in Hospitality and Tourism Management at Murang'a University. Duncan Kahoro is invited to pursue a Bachelor in Education at Moi University in the Rift Valley, well known for providing the best teachers in Kenya. John Njoroge who graduated from Nairobi School will pursue a Bachelor in Agriculture at Embu University. Peter Gatere is slated to attend Masai Mara University in Narok to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Tourism Management. Ann Njeri will attend the Rift Valley Institute of Science and Technology to pursue a Diploma in General Agriculture.

Congratulations to these accomplished students and their dedicated sponsors!

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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.

A Message from the President (Continued from front)

Francis volunteers his time to the Makena Children's Foundation (MCF) to direct the Makena Alumni Club. A partner in an IT firm founded in South Africa, Francis has a history of mentoring young adults. He has fabulous skills as a presenter, peppering his talks with stories, metaphors and examples. Never boring, Francis loves using humor and good will to make his point.

His intellect and curiosity mean he is always opening himself and our students to new ideas and clear thinking. Because he lives in Nairobi's professional world and travels for his job, Francis provides the big picture perspective to MCF, giving us context and vision for our organization, for Kenya and for our students' futures. His strong interest in instilling a strong sense of ethics in our students makes him a fine role model. One of the greatest blessings in my life is to share tasks with these two extraordinary brothers. It makes this volunteer job fun, fascinating and deeply fulfilling.



Ripple Effect

The parents and guardians of the Makena students run committees that meet quarterly to help our Foundation by handling practical tasks like students' transportation and tracking of school uniforms. They have formed strong bonds and enjoy associating with each other, so last year they began meeting monthly with the goal of working together on projects to better their community. Under the leadership of two guardian grandfathers, Solomon Wanyoike (left) and Johnson Ndugi, they already have raised about \$400 toward their first project—building a rental home that will generate funds for the group. Solomon and Johnson are the proud grandfathers to their namesakes, Makena students Solomon Wanyoike and Johnson Kamau.

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is a publication of

MAKENA Children's
Foundation, Inc.

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