

Changing
the world
one
child
at a time

MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

Fall 2020 Vol. 21, No. 2

JAMBO



A Message from the President

Anne Batzer

"One of the wonders of our willful, new reality is that even while sheltering in place we can reach out to a world very different from ours. Just because we're staying at home doesn't mean an end to touching the lives of others."

These inspiring thoughts from Makena Board member Tina Wilson were shared with me at just the right moment. It was one of those down times I'm sure we all have had during this pandemic. I was having trouble finding even a hint of a silver lining in this cloudy experience. Thank you, Tina, for reminding me of possibility, of love's infinite power.

And then...and then...You—our loyal Makena supporters—responded with an astonishing outpouring of compassion and generosity to provide food for our families in Kenya. You'll read about this lifesaving response and so much more in this newsletter.

For example: Our youngest students, many of whom are housed in homes built of mud and animal dung, have stepped up and showed themselves completely capable of attending online school. Because of their Makena sponsors, they are truly citizens of the future, ready to respond to novel challenges with creativity.

Our alumni, some of whom are furloughed from jobs they worked several years to obtain, have found inventive ways to survive and even thrive during this difficult time.

And a new Makena Board member is exploring a way to honor the global legacy of his lifelong friend by establishing an ongoing project with us.



"Makena" is a Kikuyu word that translates in English to "happy or joyful one." In spite of the worldwide pandemic that crosses every border and reveals our shared, mutual vulnerability, this newsletter is full of hopeful tales. We hope when you read these stories you feel refreshed, renewed—maybe even "happy and joyful."

Students Master On-Line Learning

By Anne Batzer

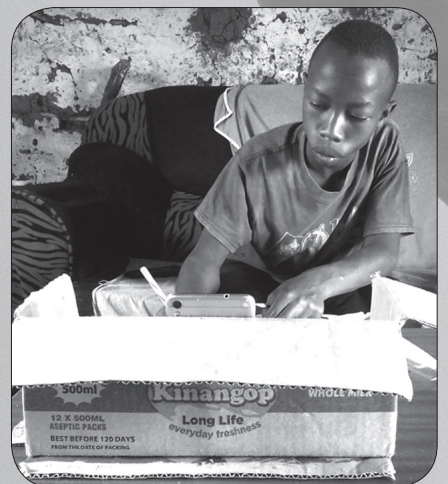
When Makena Manager Charles Karanja notified me that online learning was starting for our Lizar School elementary students, I must admit I spent a few sleepless nights.

During the pandemic, the school had been supplying worksheets for our students. While not optimal for learning, at least we knew our kids could keep up with their classmates. Online school would be much better, but how would our children connect online from their remote village? How would they possibly be able to keep and maintain a ZOOM schedule? There is no adult in their home that could troubleshoot internet issues and I've watched as adults in our country have wrestled with participating in online gatherings.

Charles realized we could buy android phones, much less expensive than smart phones, for each of our students since we are not currently paying for room and board. Our treasured Kenyan volunteer, Francis Njiraini, researched internet fees and found a reasonable one we could afford to purchase for each student. So far, so good.

But what would happen when classes started? Could our children quickly learn how to connect via ZOOM? Would they be able to be on time for daily classes? What kind of attendance could we expect?

These questions kept me up at night, but I need not have worried. In an inspiring burst of maturity, our children have set the bar high and been an example for their classmates. Their attendance has been impeccable. In some cases, they have markedly improved their grades.



Clockwise from top left: Diligent students Caroline Wanjiru, Sharon Nyambura, Harun Maina and Mary Nyokabi use android phones to participate in online learning from their homes.

Charles says our students have expressed a desire to prove they are as academically capable as their much more affluent classmates. They feel privileged to be participating in this decidedly modern method of education. Their success is a reflection of this desire and also the follow-through from their supportive families because of the high value they place on the precious gift of education for their children.



Earlier this year, before the pandemic caused a total shutdown of Nairobi's international Jomo Kenyatta airport, Makena alumnus **Simon Mwangi** was named "Star of the Month" by his employer. He works for Swissport, a business that provides a variety of airport services. In March he was furloughed from his job. However, when international air travel resumed, Simon was one of the first employees called back to his job as a Call Center and Baggage Services Agent. He says Swissport is following strict guidelines to keep employees safe. Although Simon has had to take a pay cut and sorely misses fellow employees who lost their jobs, he says, "I am really grateful that I'm still working. I believe all will be well soon."

"I believe my dreams are starting to align themselves," alumnus **Samson Machohi** says. He's recently been awarded a two-year contract for his job at the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO). Samson works on a World Bank funded project addressing how climate change is and will affect food production in Kenya. He's also continuing work on his Master's Degree, funded through a scholarship from the same organization. Of course the pandemic has affected him. His Master's classes at University of Nairobi are now all online and he is in his office just two days a week, working from home the other days.

Indomitable entrepreneur **Peris Gitundi** has "rolled with the punches" during the pandemic. Even before the Coronavirus restrictions, Peris was told by her landlord that she would need to find a new location for her shop—called "Her Wardrobe"—where she sells clothes to college students. Then, COVID-19 travel restrictions cut off her inventory because low-cost clothing was no longer arriving from international locations. Finally, Nairobi was abruptly shut down, with no one allowed to leave or enter the city from early April to early July. During these months Peris responded by starting a business selling soap to Nairobi residents. Now, in her home village of Maraigushu with her mother for awhile, Peris says the resumption of international travel means she is hoping to find a way to re-open her clothing shop.

Joseph Kairuki's cosmetics shop, Bowamz Cosmix, in the town of Kinamba, has stayed open during the pandemic. However, his products come from Nairobi and when travel out of that city was abruptly stopped in early April, Kairuki lost the source of his inventory. Then, a nationwide curfew meant he had to reduce the hours his shop was open. He says when transport of goods from Nairobi resumed in July, "suppliers raised the cost of goods and transporters hiked transportation fees, forcing us to increase the selling price." So business has been reduced. But this Economics graduate is optimistic. "Businesses are slowly normalizing and sales are a bit higher compared to when the first curfew and lock down were put in place," he says.



Makena alumnus **Njeri Nganga** continues in her job as Nursing Officer for the Kenya Nut Company. Staff lay-offs mean her responsibilities have increased, and her salary has decreased by 20%. Still, this dedicated medical professional is putting in extra long hours to educate workers about the measures necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19, as well as treating employees and their families who need medical care and offering on-the-job first aid.

Duncan Kahoro was just a couple of credits shy of graduating from Moi University—and looking forward to pursuing a career as a secondary teacher—when the pandemic forced the closure of his school. While he awaits his return to campus, he moved back to his home village of Maraigushu to help his grandmother and is doing the hard work of farming strawberries.

Because COVID-19 caused her to be furloughed from her beloved job with the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Makena alumnus **Mary Muthoni** has demonstrated her entrepreneurial spirit by selling masks to the residents of Nakuru. She says her most productive time is early morning when some residents who have jobs are on their way to work.

Nurse **Mary Gatuku** continues with her job at the Eastern Deanery AIDS Relief Program, a project funded through America's Center for Disease Control. Mary says her work has been cut to part time and sometimes there are only two nurses for nearly 100 patients during a hospital shift. But this dedicated medical worker loves her job both preventing spread of the disease and treating HIV/AIDS patients.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING DURING THE PANDEMIC?

Celebrating a Long-Time Board Member

By Mary Jo Baich

"I can never say no to Sherri Mills," says Makena board member Tina Wilson. Sherri, of course, is the founder and president emeritus of the Makena Children's Foundation (MCF). "Sherri and I worked together for years at Children's Hospital of Alabama, and we have been friends ever since. When Sherri asked me to design the MCF newsletter, I readily agreed."

Tina has been active with MCF since the beginning. "Who could have imagined that starting so small, Makena would grow to assist so many deserving children—some even on through their college years. I have deep respect for how the entire Makena Family takes on the many hardships of daily life and how they do so with such grace. I now have a much better understanding, too, of the ongoing challenges faced by the Kenyan people."

After 37 years with Corporate Communications at Children's, Tina says she is approaching retirement and looking forward to spending more time with grandchildren—and appreciating the beauty of the Gulf waters of Orange Beach, Alabama, where she lives with her husband, John.

Thank you, Tina! We appreciate your creative talents which make our newsletters sparkle.





What Does Not Change

Just because we are sheltering at home
doesn't mean we stop being a part of a greater cause.

Just because we are sheltering at home
doesn't prevent us from reaching out
to a world very different from ours.

And just because we are sheltering at home
doesn't mean an end to touching the lives of others.

Help us keep the beautiful bond formed
between Americans and Kenyans over the 23 year history
of the Makena Children's Foundation vital and strong.

**Sponsorship does not cover all of our costs.
Please send your tax-deductible gift today.**

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 ☐\$1000
- ☐ 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 _____

Welcoming a New Makena Board Member

By Mary Jo Baich

We welcome new Makena board member, Dave Eusano. Dave’s connection to MCF is deeply meaningful to us. His best friend was photographer and travel writer, David Noyes, founder of Innocent Eyes Project which graciously and generously supported us for many years. Following David Noyes’ death last November, Dave is working with the Noyes family to establish a project with us to honor the wide-ranging legacy of his lifelong friend.

Dave’s 34-year career was with United Parcel Service (UPS). In diverse locations from Washington, D.C. to Arkansas, Dave worked in the field of Operations and Engineering. He also ran UPS’s Congressional Awareness Team, which was responsible for communicating the company’s position to Congress. David retired in 2019 and their family moved back to Maryland to be closer to extended family.

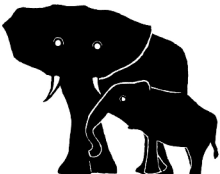
He has always made time to help children. Dave served on the board and, along with his family, volunteered at Camp Aldersgate, a camp for children with special needs near Little Rock. Welcome aboard, Dave!



Married for 27 years, Dave and his wife, Mary Ann, have two children. Their son Blake, 23, is finishing his Master’s Degree in Sports Management. Emily, their adopted daughter from Guatemala, just graduated from high school. She will be furthering her education in photography and American Sign Language. Mary Ann is beginning a teaching career, focusing on children who need extra help learning English.

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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.



Because You Gave, They Did Not Starve

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 52 families of the Makena Children’s Foundation were in mortal danger of starving to death. Commercial farms, the only source of employment for our families, were abruptly closed. Plus heavy rains ruined their crops, saturating even the few potatoes in their gardens.

Kenya has no government safety nets to help its people when famine threatens. So, for the first time in our 23-year history, we asked you for money to buy food for our families.

Because of your generous response, our families have been able to survive and feed their children. Pictured here is grandmother Hannah Njeri Kamau cooking ugali from the white corn flour provided to her by your contributions.

Please see the next edition of Makena Musings for more photos and information about how YOU helped save lives.



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