

Changing
the world
one
child
at a time

MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

Spring 2021 Vol. 22, No. 1

JAMBO



A Message from the President

Anne Batzer

Are you ready for a little inspiration?

We think you'll be energized by the articles in this newsletter. These stories describe the response from some special Americans and some outstanding Kenyans to our pandemic challenges.

As COVID-19's effects became more apparent, the Makena families' need for life-sustaining food revealed itself. You, our loyal American donors, were willing to support Kenyan families most of you will never even meet. Your empathetic response resulted in meals for hungry children and their parents. How can we ever express our gratitude to you for this inspirational generosity?

In the midst of this food project, our faith in our Kenyan students was repeatedly affirmed. For example, student John Muiruri, on hiatus between his second and third year at a university, supported himself by his job in a grocery store. Because the pandemic meant he was laid off from this job, we put John on the list to receive some funds for food. After just a couple months, John let us know he was able to pick up odd jobs and buy food for himself. In lovely conformity with Makena values, John encouraged us to take the food money we had budgeted for him and instead give it to our most needy families.



John Muiruri

Inspiration also comes in the finalization of the David F. Noyes Memorial Scholarship. The fact that we were chosen by this extraordinary man's family to honor his legacy means so much to us. And this decision has already changed the life of one deserving little girl.

The pandemic didn't stop our alumni from finding innovative ways to thrive. Our youthful adults expressed their hope and faith in their futures by looking for opportunity. Enjoy the stories of three of our young women whose lives are moving forward because their educations prepared them for bright futures. They are already living lives their mothers could only just imagine for them.

Noyes Memorial Scholarship: It's a Girl!

By Anne Batzer

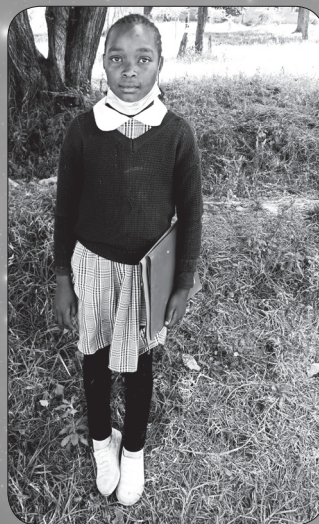
"It's a girl!" This exuberant exclamation is how David Noyes' sister Debby Brown reacted to the news that Esther Wakiuru is the first student chosen to be the recipient of the David F. Noyes Memorial Scholarship.

David Noyes' foundation, Innocent Eyes Project, supported Makena students through grants for many years. Along with funding, David shared his advice, friendship and joie de vivre with us. His unexpected death in November 2019 continues to leave us heartbroken. How we miss him!

We are so honored that Innocent Eyes Project funds, along with donations from David's family and many friends, have allowed us to establish the scholarship that bears his name. Anyone wanting to donate to the David F. Noyes Memorial Scholarship can do so through our website: makena.org.

David Noyes' wife Barbara, reacted to the choice of Esther Wakiuru this way: "I was truly touched to see and hear about our first student and her mother. To see the home they live in took me back to our travels to Kenya. They're such precious memories for me and I can see that this student and her position in life is exactly what drove David to establish Innocent Eyes Project. I know he would be so proud and humbled to know his legacy will make a difference for this mother and daughter."

And then she added the words that mean so much: "I feel as though David almost chose Esther himself."



The first recipient of the David F. Noyes Memorial Scholarship, Esther Wakiuru, was identified for us as a top student in grade 4 by her teachers at her public school, Mununga Primary School. The eighth-born of nine children, Esther is the daughter of a single mother, Hannah Njeri. Her father died in 2016.

Esther's mother, Hannah, stands proudly outside the home she shares with her nine children and her elderly parents. It's nearly impossible to understand how she supports this huge family, including one daughter who suffers from the effects of a stroke, by working as a casual laborer. In spite of extreme poverty, Hannah demonstrates the high value she places on education by always purchasing kerosene so her children can have light to complete their homework. We are so pleased to welcome this strong and interesting woman to the warmth and support of the Makena family.



Lifelong friends Dave Eusanio and David Noyes are pictured here at Eusanio's retirement party from United Parcel Service. To honor the life of Noyes, Eusanio helped craft the David F. Noyes Memorial Scholarship and has become a valuable member of the Makena Children's Foundation Board of Directors.



Moving On

By Mary Jo Baich

Three Makena alumni women have not let the pandemic stop them from finding and making the most of opportunities to expand their resumes and their world!



Dream Big

For many years Njeri Nganga dreamed of living in another culture. With seven years of persistence and pluck, the dream became reality. Njeri matched her nursing degree to the overseas job market. With a big send off by her family in February, Njeri boarded her first ever flight in Nairobi, landing at London's Heathrow Airport the following morning. Njeri was driven 235 miles north of London to the ancient city of Durham, located on the River Wear. The driver kept Njeri awake with stories of all things English, while Njeri had the startling experience of observing an icy landscape for the first time.

Following 10 days of strict quarantine, Njeri reported to work at Middleton St. George Priory, a hospital specializing in mental health issues and food disorders. When not working Njeri is training online for her job, adjusting to the northern English accent, adapting to the challenges of wintry weather and exploring her new surroundings.

Njeri says the Makena Children's Foundation has been her "pillar every step of the way."



How May I Be of Service?

Imagine calling the Department of Revenue and getting a knowledgeable, kind and accommodating person on the phone who is willing and able to lend you a hand? That's what's happening at Nairobi Metropolitan Services now that Makena graduate Alice Njoki has been hired. After Alice graduated with a degree in Actuarial Science from Egerton University in Nukuru, she went to work for an investment and insurance company that specializes in real estate, insurance and microfinance. With the spread of COVID-19 the business suffered and she had to find other employment. She currently has an internship with the Nairobi County Government which will increase her networking skills and greatly add to her resume.

Alice says one of the most interesting facets of her job — the part she loves the best — is being on the other side of a call where she listens to people's issues and offers solutions to them for their concerns about everything from parking tickets, business permits, land taxes and rental property. Alice has special talent for making people feel comfortable and there is real joy in providing solutions to their inquiries.



Weaving It All Together

Peris Gitundu has mastered weaving, not in the traditional sense of yarn, but in the economic world — marrying her two career choices into a viable income source. Peris has always been fascinated by agriculture. At the University of Kabianga, she graduated with high honors in Agricultural Economics. Her dream is to own a commercial farm, so she pursued courses in accounting, agricultural marketing and taxation.

After graduation, while pursuing an elusive job in agriculture, Peris expressed her other passion: fashion. She started a retail business selling classy thrift shop finds to college students.

Finally, now Peris is gaining experience and expertise in her field of agriculture. An intern for the Agriculture and Food Authority of Kenya, Peris is working for the Coffee Directorate in Nairobi. Here she does data entry for both coffee auctions and direct sales and takes minutes for departmental meetings. She has traveled to western Kenya to evaluate the future capacity of building coffee co-ops there, as well as assessing how to grow robusta coffee for its use in instant coffee — thus weaving together her passions to make a living.

Let Them Eat!

By Anne Batzer

"Our families are deeply moved and no words can express their gratitude," according to Makena Manager Charles Karanja. He is speaking about the funding for food provided by you, our donors. Your pandemic generosity literally saved the lives of these hard-working people. You prevented them from witnessing the slow starvation of their children.

Since our founding, it is education — and its power to transform lives — that is our passion. All of our efforts go toward funding school for children whose families cannot afford it. But we could not stand by and watch our 52 families face starvation because of the devastating effects of COVID-19. Commercial farms, the only source of employment for our families, abruptly closed. Plus heavy rains ruined their crops, saturating even the few potatoes in their gardens. Kenya has no government safety net to help its people when famine threatens.

So last year, for the first time in our 23-year history, we asked you for money to buy food for our families. Your bountiful response overwhelmed us. Your compassion and generosity stand as a beautiful example of unselfish love. Two of you even responded by helping us get essential grants for food.

Throughout this pandemic our families have been able to survive and feed their children.

Life goes on.



(Top photo) Valued friend and supporter Asifa Kanji, a member of The Southern Oregon Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, first suggested the group give MCF funds for food for our families during the pandemic. Thanks to President David Drury and Small Grants Committee Chair Patricia Duke, this exemplary group came through with a generous grant to help us.

(Bottom left) Seen here volunteering for Amigo Vision in the Dominican Republic, past Rotary District Governor and current Chair of Rotary's Peace Fellowship Committee, Chuck Root, diligently shepherded a grant through Rotary's District Grant process for us. The Rotary Club of Medford, Oregon responded with an abundant generosity of global spirit to help our families. "Isn't it amazing that we can live in one of the most beautiful places in the world and still impact the lives of people on the other side of the globe. It's great to be a Rotarian," Chuck says.

Dignity and Dreams

The parents and guardians of the Makena Kids lack many things most Americans consider essential. While, in some homes, small solar panels now power a few light bulbs and collection tanks catch rainfall, electricity and running water are way out of reach for most of our families. During the pandemic, we've learned how tenuous food security also is for their families.

What these hard-working people do NOT lack is dignity. Dignity and Dreams. Kenyan dreams for their children are exactly the same as American dreams. And education is the most sustainable path out of poverty for Kenyan families.



**Sponsorships do not cover all of our costs.
Please help us with a donation to keep our students in school.**

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 _____

Thank you, Tina

By Makena Founder and President Emeritus Sherri Mills

This is a love letter to my friend, Tina Wilson, who is resigning as a Board of Directors member and graphic designer for this Makena newsletter, *Makena Musings*. Over the years, beginning in 1998, Tina has contributed to the newsletter in various ways... as a writer, editor and graphic designer. Her time and talents were given freely, out of love. The organization could not have paid the market rate for her services.

In the beginning, Tina and I, working alone, produced a very modest, but earnest (and irregular) newsletter. However, as time went by, our efforts were much enhanced by the writing skills of Mary Jo Baich and Anne Batzer. Through their efforts, along with Tina's talents, now we have an attractive, well-written, informative newsletter for you, our friends and donors.

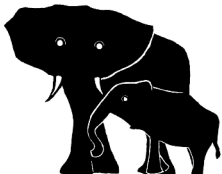
In February, Tina retired after 37 years with Children's of Alabama, Alabama's premier pediatric health system. She and I met in 1988 when I began a career at Children's. We developed a friendship that has lasted through the years, enhanced by our matching commitment to children. Tina has made a great contribution to our organization over the years, and an even greater contribution of love, support and friendship to me and my family. Thank you for the privilege of thanking her publicly.

The photo above is from a 2000 Children's of Alabama event. Pictured on the left is Tina Wilson; on the right is Sherri Mills.



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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.



Best Wishes, Students

As we distribute this newsletter, four Makena students are taking the tests that will determine their academic futures.

One student, **Virginia Wangui**, is graduating from Happyland Girls Senior School. She is taking the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education exam (KCSE.) Her score will determine her eligibility for university or technical school placement. Because of her natural empathy and engaging personality, Virginia has emerged as a class leader!

Three students are graduating from Lizar Schools and going on to secondary school. Each is taking the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education exam (KCPE) which is a comprehensive summary of their elementary school learning:

Teresita Kabura — Because of her dazzling presence and her starring roles in Lizar Schools' drama program, we call Teresita our "sparkplug."

Erick Waithaka — Because of his sharp, quick mind, we refer to Erick as our intellectual with a deep interest in architecture.

Brian Karanja — Because of his exquisite manners, Brian is our gentleman, with a quiet curiosity and a strong work ethic.

Congratulations to these accomplished scholars!

From top: Virginia, Teresita, Erick and Brian.



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