

Changing  
the world  
one  
child  
at a time

# MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

Fall 2021 Vol. 22, No. 2

## JAMBO



### A Message from the President

Anne Batzer

Life goes on.

In spite of the ongoing pandemic challenges, Kenyans and Americans are finding our way.

With youthful persistence, our Kenyan students are overcoming the challenge of repeated school closures. Now, with wearing masks and social distancing, they are back in school and progressing in their studies. We're inspired by their boundless enthusiasm for continuing their learning journey.

And our American sponsors have reached out to us with a huge dose of amazing generosity. Our email inbox has been full of hopeful ideas coupled with donations to help us continue our mission during this stressful time. We're humbled by the kindness of this unsolicited response to this unprecedented time.

This newsletter is full of just some of these stories that inspire and humble us.

Because of the benevolence of new sponsors, two new students have joined the Makena family. Their stories are ones of hope and renewal.

The pandemic has held particular challenges for our new alumnae. While some have managed to maintain their jobs, others have been laid off or been unable to obtain their first employment. One sponsor showed his commitment extends beyond graduation. His purchase of a laptop and his willingness to mentor the student he has sponsored for many years demonstrates incredible dedication.

The list goes on. Enjoy the stories of our students who have graduated and progressed to higher levels of education. Their passion is evident.

We are filled with gratitude for the opportunity to do this work—and for the intricate beauty of the human spirit it reveals.

## A Path of Hope

New student Asnel Were is from a family that, like so many worldwide, has been devastated by HIV. When her mother Eunice realized she had been infected with this dreadful disease by her husband, she divorced him and embarked on the difficult task of being a single mother. The baby Eunice was pregnant with at the time died before her first birthday because of complications from HIV.

Fortunately, Eunice's disease is now controlled with medication. But the only job she could find is being a nurse's aide in faraway Nakuru. She has no space—no home there to share with her two daughters. She made the difficult decision to leave Asnel with her older sister in a small rented room in Kinamba.

The two girls have been living on their own.

In spite of these difficult early experiences, Asnel has left her home at 6:30 every morning in order to arrive at her village school on time. Her grades consistently put her in position 1 or 2 out of the 50 students in her class. Her teachers speak highly of her because of her intelligence, positive personality and commitment to learning.

When Makena manager Charles Karanja asked Asnel if she would be interested in attending a better school, she burst into tears of joy. Her mother Eunice also cried when she learned of this hopeful opportunity provided by sponsor Diane Schaffer, PhD.

A retired professor of social work from San Jose State University, Diane told us she chose to support a child through the Makena Children's Foundation for several reasons:



*"First, because students are chosen and supported by Kenyan educational professionals; second, because the Makena Foundation, well run by its volunteer administration, has very low overhead, so most of my contribution goes directly to support a student. And third, Makena makes it possible for me to communicate with "my" student by letter, which is a great joy to me as I get to know Asnel better with each letter."*

We welcome Eunice and Asnel to the support and joy of the Makena family.





# Answering a Call

By Mary Jo Baich

Inspiring words call for action, so when Nancy and Dave Wistrand of Alpharetta, Georgia heard their pastor say, “Do for one family what you wish you could do for many,” they notified the Makena Children’s Foundation (MCF) that they would give the gift of education to a child in Kenya.



Martin Chege’s Mother

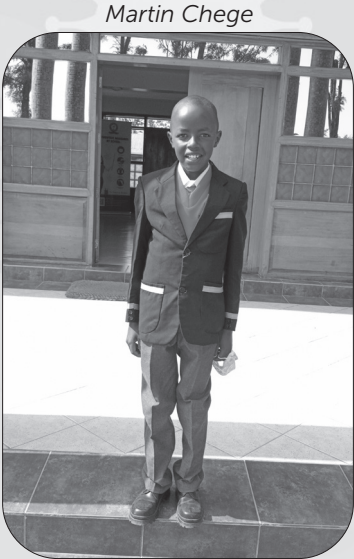
“For the first time”, Nancy said, “we felt like we were really responding to this clarion call.”

We at MCF cheered and the exciting process of choosing our next student began. Charles Karanja, our Kenyan manager, consulted first with teachers in the local school, included community elders in the process and conversed with advisors at Lizar School where our elementary age children attend.

After careful consideration, Martin Chege stood out to all for his unique, mature presence and his great desire to obtain a good education. Martin, a 5th grader, is the youngest of 12 children. His father died 3 years ago. Despite his youth, it is Martin who gathered his siblings together after his father’s funeral and urged them to “love one another” so they would continue to be a strong family unit. His mother, Naomi Muthoni, describes Martin as her “gifted child.” After meeting Martin, Charles said he was

touched by his determination and courage in the face of the extreme poverty and profound loss he has experienced. Martin will be the first in his family to obtain a high school diploma.

Thank you, Nancy and Dave, for your gift of hope!



Martin Chege



Nancy & Dave Wistrand

# Transformation

By Anne Batzer

The pandemic means there is no graduation ceremony, but that does not stop our celebration of Virginia Wangui’s successful completion of high school. This lively young woman, whose warmth and empathy drives her superb leadership skills, finished the secondary curriculum at Happyland Girls’ Senior School with flying colors. We are so proud of her!

This first photo (top right) shows Virginia being welcomed as an elementary student by Makena Founder and President Emeritus Sherri Mills. Next, (lower right photo) Virginia exudes positive energy as a confident high school student. In this last photo (right), Virginia receives the laptop required for her participation in college classes. She has been accepted at Kisii University. Her good grades qualify her for acceptance into their Mathematics and Computer major. Congratulations, Virginia!



# Thank you

By Mary Jo Baich

“This ‘thank you’ does not do any justice for the beautiful laptop you gave me. I absolutely love it and I will safely take care of it”. These words from recent Makena graduate Peter Gatere express his gratitude at the amazing gift of a laptop given to him by his longtime sponsor Bill Goodhew.

As Bill and Peter communicated about improving Peter’s CV, Bill discovered Peter’s laptop had been stolen. Bill generously offered to purchase a new laptop for him.

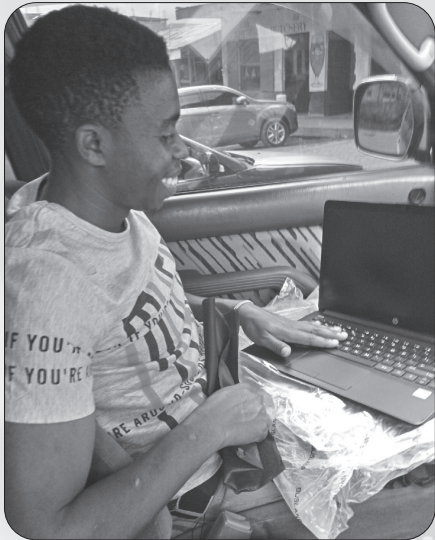


A graduate of Georgia Tech, Bill spent 40 years in marketing and general management in the computer software industry, the last 12 as CEO of Peachtree Software. He also has 7 grandchildren and one of them, Elizabeth, is willing to lend Peter a hand in acquiring the skills he needs to learn skills in Power Point and Excel. Elizabeth even advised Bill on the type of computer Peter would need to accomplish these goals.

Peter Gatere graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Tourism Management, then completed an internship at the Narok National Museum. His computer was his gateway tool to enthusiastically promote and share knowledge of the culture and history of Kenya with local and international visitors in an informative and entertaining way.

The pandemic, however, caused a loss of jobs in tourism and Peter knew that his sponsor would be knowledgeable about how to restructure his resume to cast a wider net in his search for a job.

Once Bill made the offer of a new laptop, the wheels were quickly set in motion with the help of Francis Njiraini. Makena’s Country Director, who purchased the laptop. Charles Karanja, Makena’s Liaison Manager, delivered the computer to Peter in Naivasha.





# Family

By Mary Jo Baich

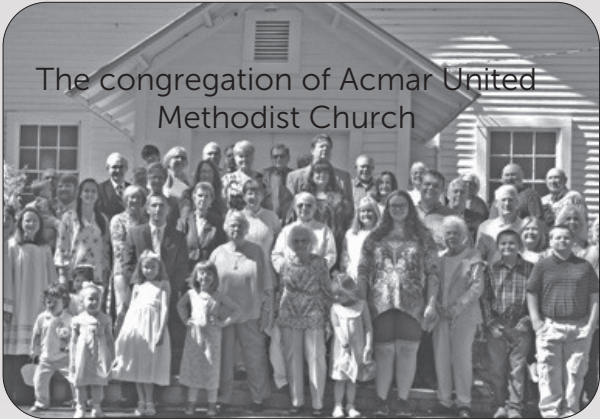
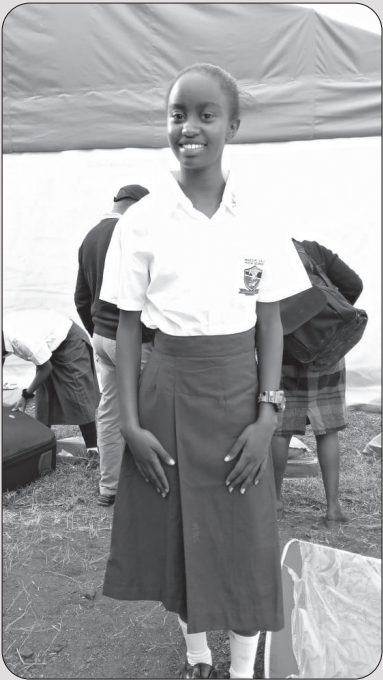
We asked Reverend Belinda Wilson of Acmar United Methodist Church in Moody, Alabama why they offered to sponsor a second child. She replied:

“Our church family is truly blessed to sponsor Teresita. It has been said that some people are part of your family because of birth and are always there while others become a part of your family because of a chosen connection. We were “family” first with Martha Waithera, who is now a teacher in Nairobi. We are grateful that God has given us the joy of having Teresita join our extended family”.



And Teresita Kabura is holding up her sponsor’s family name beautifully. Teresita finished her primary grades and scored so well on her placement test that the Kenyan government selected her to attend the excellent Mugoiri Girls High School.

Congratulations to Teresita as she begins secondary school and thank you, Acmar, for her gift of education.



**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 \_\_\_\_\_

# Moving On

By Anne Batzer

Because of the pandemic there are no cap-and-gown photos of our students. Graduation ceremonies were not held because of the risk of spreading the virus. However, Brian Karanja and Erick Waithaka graduated from Lizar Elementary School and enrolled at Rockfield Senior School. In these photos, Brian tries on a sweater and looks on as Erick adjusts his tie—all part of the uniforms at Rockfield. We are so grateful to have our students attending this fine boys school located just outside Nairobi in Kiserian.

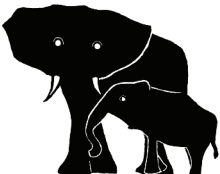
Unlike most Kenyan campuses, art is an integral part of the atmosphere at Rockfield. This charming sculpture greets visitors to the school.

Along with excellent academics, Rockfield attends to students' emotional needs. Boys are divided into groups of 10, each with a mentor. These groups are called "families." School personnel says they have few discipline problems because we "teach our boys to talk it out." Conflicts are dealt with early on, before they become complicated and less easy to resolve.



## MAKENA Musings

Fall 2021



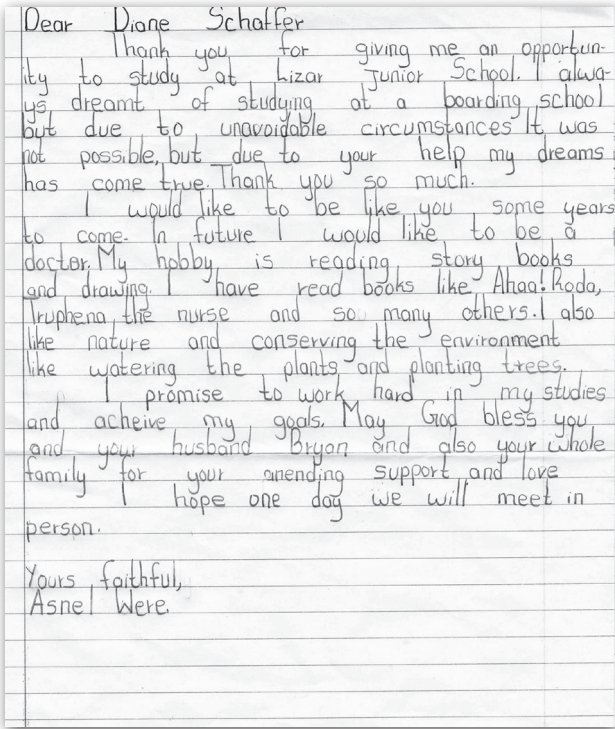
MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.  
711 Medford Center, #117  
Medford, OR 97504

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.



## First Letter

This thoughtful, carefully written letter is the first to be sent to sponsor Diane Schaffer from student Asnel Were. It may be the beginning of a sweet, long lasting relationship. Makena sponsors—who want to—can write to their sponsored student and receive replies. Some sponsors send a small gift, like a book, to their sponsored student with Makena President Anne Batzer when she travels to Kenya. Once the student is old enough to receive a laptop computer, some sponsors and students use the internet to develop deep and lasting relationships. At least five Makena sponsors have traveled to Kenya and spent time visiting with their student and his/her family. There is no requirement that these relationships form. Rather they unfold naturally as time and the inclinations of both sponsors and students allow.



### MAKENA Musings

is a publication of

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

Laurel Briggs  
Graphic Designer  
laurel@creativemdesign.com

Sherri Mliis  
Founder & President Emeritus  
sm595@bellsouth.net