

Changing
the world
one
child
at a time

MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

Spring 2023 Vol. 23, No. 1

JAMBO



A Message
from the
President

Anne Batzer

After the long, lonely desert of the pandemic, it was wonderful to be back in southern Kenya, always teeming with life. It had been three years since I'd touched down at Jomo Kenyatta airport, greeted our manager Charles Karanja, reveled in the exquisite beauty of Africa and spent long days working with our alumni, our students, their families, their teachers and networking with professionals to help our graduates.



Reunion. This word has new meaning for me. The definition is so simple: a coming together after a separation. But not described in that definition are the feelings: the roller coaster of emotions that accompany being with "our" kids after so long away.



What bliss in seeing their amazing accomplishments. What concern in seeing the challenges generated by the complex poverty of Kenya.

How I wish each of you reading this could have been there with me. How grateful I am that Makena Board member Susan Reinecke accompanied me on this very special trip. This was Susan's second trip with me and her background as a teacher and a Societal Advancement faculty member at the Center for Creative Leadership means she is a fully participating member of our team. Her wisdom will guide us forward.



I can report that the Makena Children's Foundation is thriving. I hope the articles in this newsletter give you a sense of the lovely rhythm of our experience of finally being back in Kenya.

What JOY!



When they met in November, most of our Makena alumni had not been together since before the pandemic. Simon Maina, Alice Njoki and Peris Gitundi enjoyed sharing stories of their lives, supporting each other and laughing together. They expressed the joy of reunion that permeated our entire trip.

More Joy



Our beautiful graduating eighth graders, Sylvia Wambui, Andrey Mungai, Collins Kamau, Mary Wanjiku and Caroline Wanjiru, celebrate their amazing scores on the comprehensive test given at the end of elementary school. All scored in the top 20% of the 1,233,852 students who took the test. Two of them scored in the top 1%. We are so proud of them. Wow!

Coming to America

By Mary Jo Baich

If you could choose a special someone to care for your children: see they got to school on time; carefully observe uniforms were in good shape; pay diligent attention to the mood of each child, noting if they need extra emotional support, or just someone to talk to---you would decidedly choose Charles Karanja. And if he just showed up ready and willing to lend his fatherly hand, well you would call that a blessing. And Charles is a blessing to the Makena Children's Foundation (MCF.) Since 2006 he has been our "Liaison in Kenya" expertly meeting the needs of our children and weaving these little ones into one big family.

It has been our long-time desire to introduce Charles to our supporters so they might see for themselves the quality of the person who guides, cares and lavishes loving attention on our children. And finally, it is happening!

Getting a travel visa from Kenya to the US can be challenging, especially during the pandemic, with the process taking over a year of jumping through bureaucratic hoops. All is in order now and Charles will visit America for the first two weeks of October. Speaking of blessings, no MCF funds will be used, as a sponsor is generously covering all his travel expenses.



Charles Karanja

We are excited to welcome Charles to America!

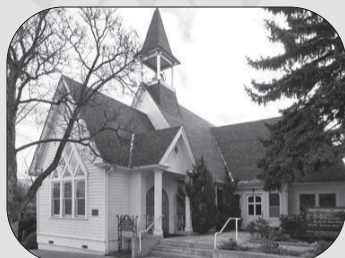
A Little Help from our Friends

We are so grateful for two grants: one met the basic needs of our families and the second enriched the lives of our graduating eighth graders.



The Medford Rotary Club donated \$2500 that bought high quality seeds and chickens, benefiting at least 215 family members. Malnutrition is a constant companion to our subsistence farmers. Often, children coming into our program have reddish hair---a sure sign of this scourge. And, usually when we ask a new student what they like best about their new school, they say, "I get enough to eat!" This grant bought high quality seeds for crops these farmers know how to grow---corn, beans, carrots and various greens such as spinach and kale. Along with the seeds, each family received two egg-laying chickens that will provide much-needed protein. Our

families were overjoyed at this benefit prompted by the efforts of Rotarian Chuck Root. Their message: God Bless Chuck! God Bless Rotary!



Because of the generosity of a Trinity Episcopal Church (in Ashland, Oregon) grant our graduating eighth-graders enjoyed a five-day field trip to Mombasa. This photo shows the students at one of several museums they visited. The students, who had never traveled before, took a school bus early on the morning of December 1 from Lizar School in Naivasha to the train station in

Nairobi. There they boarded the train for the 6 hour trip to Mombasa.

The students enjoyed time together at several of the area's gorgeous Indian Ocean beaches and spent their days learning about the history of this area, particularly the 15th and 16th century Portuguese slave trade. They visited museums and many historic sites including the Vasco Da Gama Pillar, built by the explorer in 1498; Fort Jesus, used to smuggle slaves out of Kenya, and Hallar Park, an important nature experiment with vital ecological lessons.

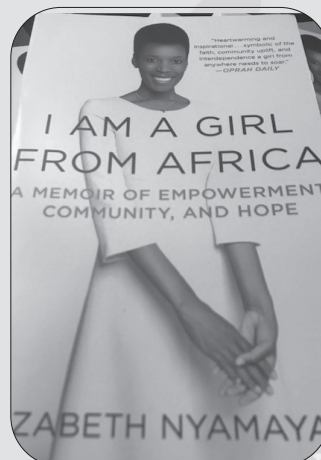


They learned so much and had so much fun. Our profound gratitude to the Medford Rotary Club and Trinity Episcopal Church.

Precious Books

Susan Reinecke took both books she has co-authored as gifts to our schools and our students. She presented her book, *Social-Emotional Leadership: A Guide for Youth Development* to the principals of all of our schools. In every case, the administrators perused the book and then requested a meeting with Susan to talk with her about its content. They were inspired! Susan also shared her children's book, *Building Bridges: Leadership for You and Me* to our delighted young ones and their school libraries.

Makena sponsor Mary Lee Comer generously provided many copies of the stirring book *I am a Girl from Africa* by Elizabeth Nyamayaro for our older girls and their school libraries.



We appreciate the generosity of these gifts that educate and enlighten our students and their teachers.

Happy Anniversary!

We celebrated the 25 years of the Makena Children's Foundation with this beautiful cake at our parent/guardian meeting.



So Close, Can You Help?

By Mary Jo Baich

So Close: the victory lap with their coveted diploma is within sight and yet---for one reason or another--- their sponsors are unable to help these young men cross the finish line.

Will you please sponsor one of these young men? Sponsorship is \$2,500 a year, with just one or two years remaining.

Evans Mungai is getting his degree in IT from Kenyatta University. Sophisticated and hilarious, Evans will graduate with a Diploma in April 2024.

Simon Gatonye is enrolled at Egerton University. Saying he “loves teaching” Simon will graduate in December 2024 with a Bachelor’s Degree in Education.

John Muiruri is studying Hotel Management at Chuka University. Independent and entrepreneurial, John will receive his Bachelor’s Degree in January 2025.



John Muiruri



Evans Mungai

What an encouragement it would be to these men to obtain these treasured certificates. Of course we always need generous donations to cover the additional educational costs of our growing young people. Can you please help?



Simon Gatonye

**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 \$2500 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 _____

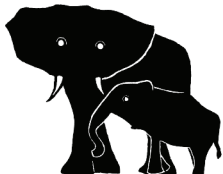
“We Want to be a Part of the Makena Story”

This statement summarized a meeting we had in Kenya with professionals who vowed to help our graduates find jobs. Pictured here are Elizabeth Ndeleva, longtime Makena volunteer Liz Kuhi Njiraini and Sharon Mbugua. Elizabeth has 16 years of experience in Human Resource Management, including talent acquisition/recruitment, training and development and performance management. Liz Kuhi has a background in business and IT and has served in senior management in local and international tech driven firms. Sharon is an accomplished research professional who is passionate about the power of market research, in addition, she is an executive and business coach.



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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.

Johnson graduates

Congratulations!

Johnson Kamau is our latest university graduate. He now has a Bachelor's degree in Hospitality and Tourism from Murang'a University College. Johnson was sponsored by the Saleem Jahangir scholarship fund, set up by Omar Jahangir MD in honor of his father. We are so proud of Johnson for completing his educational journey!



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