

Changing  
the world  
one  
child  
at a time

# MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

Spring 2024 Vol. 24, No. 1

## JAMBO



A Message  
from the  
President

Anne Batzer

If you really want to know someone, travel with them.

I have nothing but warm and wonderful memories of the 17 days our Kenyan Manager Charles Karanja spent in our country last Fall. Although he had never flown on an airplane before taking the long journey from Nairobi to Washington DC, Charles arrived without jet lag and with boundless curiosity about every new person, every new experience and every new food.

"America is a country that works," he said several times, even when talking about things I often complain about, like our traffic. Of course, compared to Kenya with its barely-there economy and our Makena families' daily struggle just to provide enough food, the U.S. is doing well.

What Charles brought along with him from Kenyan culture is its refreshing politeness, respectful behavior, cheeky humor and the belief that everything unfolds as it should.

Charles, using English which is his third language, spoke at six events. At one of the more formal talks, an Oregon Rotary Club, Charles nervously whispered, "Everyone here is white." "Now you know how I feel in Kenya," I replied.

When all the work was finished, we headed for the Pacific Ocean to relax. "It's wild! It's so wild!!" Charles declared, comparing the crashing surf to the turquoise calm of the Indian Ocean. Then he turned, struck a pose and said,

"Peace to everyone on earth!"



## IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES!

By Mary Jo Baich

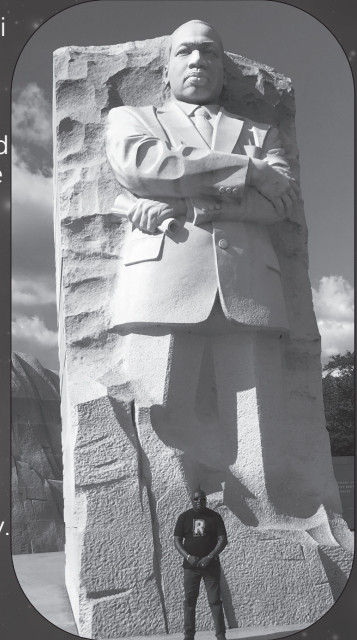
How could it not be? Charles Karanja, our Kenyan manager, was on his way to the USA to visit sponsors and donors of the Makena Children's Foundation--all made possible by a gift from our long time Makena sponsor, Laura Spolum. Anne Batzer and Mary Jo Baich eagerly awaited his arrival into Washington Dulles Airport and led him on a 4-day whirlwind tour of the sights of our nation's capital. Touring by electric car we took in the city and, most interesting for Charles, was Capitol Hill and the MLK Memorial. We visited the White House, the Botanical Gardens, Howard University, as well as the Air & Space Museum and the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Our stay in DC was capped off by a performance under the big tent of Cirque du Soleil.



Laura Spolum with Charles

Then on to Birmingham, Alabama to spend time with Makena Founder Sherri Mills and her husband Bert Brosowsky. A tour of beautiful Birmingham awaited Charles and a chance to personally meet sponsors and donors at Sherri and Bert's home. Sunday morning everyone gathered at Acmar United Methodist Church in Moody, Alabama to thank the congregation for their continuing sponsorship of Makena students.

A cross country flight brought Charles to Southern Oregon and a flurry of gatherings were scheduled where he met sponsors and donors who live in the Rogue Valley at two Rotary Clubs, and receptions at both Anne Batzer's home and the Naumes Suncrest Winery. Tucked into his speaking engagements Charles had an opportunity to visit the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Then, Makena sponsors Kathy Helmer and Mary Carol and Tom Day took him on an excursion to Crater Lake National Park



Charles at the  
MLK Memorial

Laura Spolum and Makena Secretary Susan Reinecke flew in to accompany Charles, Anne and myself on a drive to the Oregon Coast visiting the majestic coastal redwoods along the way. We settled into historic Bandon by the Sea and got a chance to walk the dramatic coastline with its towering sea stack rock formations, and listen to the noisy barking of seals and sea lions at Simpson's Reef. And yes, some good food was had along the way.

All who encountered Charles were greatly impressed by his commitment to our Makena children, his wisdom, humor and ability to adapt to the ever-changing circumstances of his visit. We vividly remember his astonishment that you could drink water from any faucet, where only bottled water is safe in Kenya. Donor Bernadette Lombard said it best, "I never turn on water now without gratitude, thanks to Charles Karanja." It was indeed, the best of times.



Charles speaking at the  
Naumes Suncrest Winery

# Congratulations to our Recent Graduates!



**David Maina** received his Diploma in General Agriculture from the Rift Valley Institute of Science and Technology. Sponsored by the Rogue Rotary Club in Medford, Oregon, David wrote a beautiful "thank you" letter to his sponsors: "I feel humbled and blessed to have seen this dream come true. If it were not for you, this would just remain a dream. You have made it a success. I thank you dearly with great love and may you receive it from the depth of my heart."



**Naomi Mwangi** graduated in Nursing from Kenya Medical Technical College. To her sponsor she wrote: "Thank God for you being in my life. Thank you for your great support and being patient with me. May God bless you. I deeply appreciate the sacrifice you have made."



**Rose Waithera** graduated in Pharmacy from Kenya Medical Technical College. She wrote: "I am super excited for passing my board exam. Glory be to God. You ignited this great feeling in me! May God bless you abundantly."

## Njeri Nganga and Robert Kariuki Nganga Celebrate their Engagement

For their engagement celebration that included joyous singing and dancing, Makena alumnus Njeri and her fiance Robert traveled from England back to Kenya for the traditional dowry ceremony. They first met in Kenya where both were working as nurses. After a year of diligent effort, they were able to move to England to work in their field. Robert was employed in London, Njeri up north. Now both are nurses in West Midlands.

A gracious role model for how to help others, Njeri previously traveled back to Kenya to fund a beautiful new home for her mother. She also volunteers her time to mentor our other Makena nurses.

About their dowry ceremony Njeri says, "Both our families love each other and we had a good moment bonding with them." About their future she adds, "We plan on investing in Kenya and going back after some time."

We wish Njeri and Robert a lifetime of adventure and happiness!



## Trinity Episcopal Church Gives Another Important Grant

We are so grateful to Trinity Episcopal Church in Ashland, Oregon for giving us another grant so our three graduating eighth graders could take a five day field trip to Mombasa.

The students, who had never traveled before, took an early morning school bus from Naivasha to Nairobi where they boarded a train for the six-hour ride 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 the 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.

This opportunity educated our students about their country's history and deepened their bond with each other and their unique ecology.



*Maureen Wilson-Jarrard, Chair of Trinity Episcopal Church's Outreach Distribution Committee, addresses the crowd at the church's annual Mardi Gras fundraiser.*



*Makena graduating eighth graders at the entrance to Hallar Park, a showcase of conservation with a sanctuary for orphaned Kenyan wildlife.*

# “Education is the only weapon against poverty”

By Mary Jo Baich



The Makena Children’s Foundation is in its 27th-year of existence, but the real importance of our mission was brought home to all of us by our Kenyan Manager, Charles Karanja.

During his visit to the United States in the Autumn of 2023 he related his first-hand experience of seeing children from our very poor families be given a chance to rise against all odds and become contributing citizens of their families, village, country and the world.

In his many speeches Charles said, *“It is noble work and it is evident that education is the only weapon against poverty. It touches me and brings joy and fulfillment to my heart to witness the transformation of these children through your support.”*

*Won’t you join us in continuing the Makena mission of educating the children of Kenya?*

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

**Makena Children’s Foundation ... educating children in Kenya since 1997**

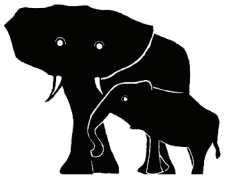
# Merry Christmas!



Because of your generosity, we were able to give our families a Christmas gift of \$25. Pictured here, a small number came together to receive this gift, others were given it through Kenya's mpesa phone system. For most of these families, it was the only thing that allowed them to celebrate the holiday.

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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.

## Moving On

We are bursting with pride because of the success of our recently graduated eighth graders. All took the comprehensive test at the end of primary school (KCPE) and scored in the top 20% of the 1,406,557 students who sat for the exam. Because of their outstanding scores, Harun Maina, Asnel Were and Sharon Nyambura were invited to top secondary schools.

Wow!

Our Kenyan manager Charles Karanja proudly accompanied Harun Maina on his first day at Anestar Boys Secondary School.



Makena volunteer Carol Nyambura lovingly supported Asnel Were and Sharon Nyambura (no relation to Carol) for their arrival at Anestar Precious Girls Secondary School.

### MAKENA Musings

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