Mbatha Kiseve

DREAMS OF BECOMING A SCIENTIST

Mbatha Kiseve has been in our Sponsorship Program since she was 9 years old. She and her twin sister Ndoti are best friends. They live with their mother who is HIV+ and adheres well to her anti-retroviral medications. The mother does occasional domestic work to provide for the family needs. A young niece also shares their home.

Mbatha is a quiet and shy girl, polite and helpful, always smiling. She suffers from allergies during the dry season, thought to be the cause of (or at least an irritant to) chronic eye problems. She has attended the eye clinic regularly over the last five years for treatment but still the problem persists. We have recently provided Mbatha with eyeglasses, and her improved vision has brought her much relief. We will continue to provide access to eye doctors and treatments if necessary.

Mbatha believes her eye problems have negatively affected her school performance, but she has worked very hard and successfully advanced to the next level every school year. Last year, Mbatha finished 5th in her class, a great achievement for her. She studied very hard to score 290 marks out of 500. Mbatha is now 14 years old and in 8th grade, her last year of primary education! Her mother cannot afford secondary school, so MCP will continue to cover Mbatha’s school fees and expenses. Mbatha is overjoyed to be able to continue school.

In school, Mbatha’s favorite subjects have always been science and Kiswahili. She hopes to be a scientist someday. We have enjoyed watching Mbatha grow up and succeed in school and look forward to helping her achieve her dream of becoming a scientist.

Mbatha is one of the children in our sponsorship program. Contact us at HelpTheKids@Makindu.org if you want to watch her grow and help her achieve her dreams.

Says Sponsor Steve Randolph, “My wife and I have been sponsors for several years and really enjoy the special connection to the children. Currently we are following the progress of a little guy named Wambua (which I think means he was born on a rainy day). We look forward to the updates, photos and drawings. He faces challenges (HIV+ and orphaned) but with the care and attention we know he receives at the Center, he has HOPE of a brighter future.”
EDUCATING GIRLS:
The Story of MARY MBITHE MUTAVI

By Tom Mwanza, MCC Director

Educating the young generation is the single most important thing that can be done to improve the world. However, Kenyan society is structured such that it is hard for girls to transition well in the various education levels.

Makindu Children’s Centre is very keen in ensuring the girls transition to the various education levels which is well monitored and facilitated. With that, we have been in touch with Daraja Academy, a girls high school in Nanyuki, 400 km north of Makindu. Daraja Academy offers a 4 1/2 year scholarship to 30 girls each year worth 1 million Kenyan shillings. The scholarship covers books, school uniforms, personal effects and a six month transitional program after graduation for the girls to become empowered with computer and business skills. Included in this scholarship is a special program called WISH (Women with Integrity, Strength and Hope).

This year we managed to help Mary Mbithe Mutavi secure a Daraja Academy scholarship. This is her story:

“I have struggled under very difficult circumstances to get good marks and I believe that I deserve the opportunity at Daraja to mold my dream of being a doctor.” Those were the winning words that got Mary a chance at Daraja.

Mary is a 16 year old girl from Ngakaa Sub location, Twaandu Location, Makindu Sub County. She lives with her widowed, HIV positive mother who struggles to make ends meet for Mary and her two other children, one in high school and the other in primary. Mary’s father passed away in 2012 when she was only 11 years old.

In her primary school years, Mary lived with her aunt (twin sister to the mother) since her mother had to take care of their sickly aged grandmother. She received a school uniform in primary school. However she has had to go through challenges of being absent from school as her mother and even the aunt couldn’t afford to pay the school levies required.

Somehow with all the challenges, Mary was able to score 339 marks out of the possible 500 in her KCPE. Her mother could not afford to take her to school. She knocked on all doors to find any opportunity to support her child to school. When she finally came upon MCC, we informed her of the Daraja Academy opportunity and helped her fill out the application forms.

Within a week after filling the forms, Mary’s mother received a call from Daraja inviting Mary for an interview. She saw this as a God sent opportunity but she could not even afford transport for Mary to attend the interview. She was so thrilled and thankful when MCC covered the cost of transportation and accompanied Mary to Daraja for her interview.

Mary later received a call from Daraja stating that she had been successful and was required to report to the school in 3 days. The MCC office again facilitated the transportation to Daraja. We are pleased to report that Mary is doing extremely well in school, earning position 1 in her last term exam.

KENYAN SCHOOLGIRL STATS

- 1 in 2 rural Kenyan girls will never go to school.
- 1 in 8 Kenyan schoolgirls will become pregnant before they celebrate their 14th birthday.
- Every year, about 13,000 Kenyan girls leave school forever due to pregnancy.
- 90% of these teenage mothers become prostitutes

Source: CREAM Kenya

TWO FUNDRAISING SAFARIS HEADING TO KENYA TO SUPPORT THE KIDS AT MAKINDU CHILDREN’S CENTRE

Board Member Michael Farley will lead his second safari to Makindu from August 24—September 4, 2017.
The group will engage in a welcome ceremony and service project at the Centre, a game drive safari in Tsavo West Game Park (accompanied by 12 of the children) and a camel safari in the Laikipia Highlands.

Board Member Marcia Moore will lead her first safari to Makindu from October 10—25, 2017.
This group will engage in a welcome ceremony and tour of the Centre, safari in the Masai Mara and enjoy island paradise on Lamu.
Makindu Children’s Centre has been a tremendous gift in my life! But I am just one of many. For over 400 children, MCC is a place of refuge, of emotional encouragement and stability. For a number of years, I was among the well-intentioned “outsiders”...those who admire the mission and are moved by the difference the Centre is making in the lives of so very many children but stopping short of making a big commitment to support it. After all, the difference was taking place a world away from my typical hustle and bustle life in Washington DC and in a place that eluded me from truly understanding its magic and influence. That was about to change. In July of 2016, armed with information I gleaned off the MCC website, stories from folks who visited previously, and conversations with longtime friend Michael Farley, I traveled there with the first Proper Safari to see it for myself. From that point in time, I have not, nor ever will be the same!

My expectations for the trip were simple... get myself there without a hitch, make sure I wasn’t late for any departure times, and help wherever needed. I can’t say that I wasn’t “prepared” for my personal encounter with MCC, but I will say that I dramatically underestimated its impact on me. Walking towards the Centre, our group was greeted by child scouts who were on the lookout for our arrival. As we got closer, the crowds of children swelled and, before long, we were being escorted down the path and onto the property guided by hundreds of chanting and gleeful children. As I sit at my desk writing this story this morning, the memory still brings tears to my eyes. After all, how can the sight and sound not change me? How can I ever think back on the emotional charge it evoked and not be humbled by its impression on me? I was enveloped in pure love and adulation and I was trying my best to soak it in and stay planted on the ground at the same time! Welcome to Makindu!

For hours we played outdoor games with the kids, delighted them with candy and other presents, were entertained with songs, skits and dances and had a delicious meal of rice, tomatoes and lamb. It was an impressive feast and celebration of the highest order! Early in my arrival, however, my heart and mind were focused on a special little girl that I learned went by the name Daniella. She stayed close to me most of the day (or perhaps it was the other way around) and when it was time to leave she walked the mile or so back to where the roads converged and we parted in separate directions to where we were staying. Daniella was 9 years old, with a beautiful and shy smile and an eager way about her that let me know she was strong spirited and capable of any opportunity life offered her! She was unique and different, but she also was dealing with the gruesome reality of living with one of her legs growing backwards from the knee down. That type of deformity in a country where harsh realities are difficult to overlook made her future uncertain, and my heart knew she deserved so much more than what her current fate held for her!

Co-Founder of MCC Winnie Barron and Proper Safari Captain Michael Farley helped me intercede on her behalf and, together, we got Daniella the help she deserved. Working with other NGO’s, I donated the remaining funds to ensure she had the surgical procedure and after-care that corrected the issue. Now, she is running without a cane and embracing her life and her future with sheer joy. One of the most heartwarming emails I received during that time frame was when her cast was removed and the staff described how overtaken with emotion she became, seeing her foot and toes pointed correctly forward for the first time! When I say that MCC has been a tremendous gift in my life, it’s because of children like Daniella who somehow gave much more to me than she got in return. I cannot wait to get back there this summer, on the second Proper Safari, and see her in person again. After all, my heart never left Makindu or Daniella! They are a part of me now and always!

If you are interested in meeting the children and participating in a life-changing experience, consider joining one of our upcoming safaris, occurring annually for the foreseeable future. Contact HelpTheKids@makindu.org.
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES

Mutheu Nzilani- She has been in MCC for 9 years. She is a total orphan who is taken care of by her uncles. She hails from remote Kamboo and many people from the area are not learned. She will be among the few girls who complete high school education. Mutheu wants to be a doctor.

Mwikali Kyengo- She hails from Kiboko location. She has been in MCC for 8 years. Her mother is a single parent on care. She wants to be a nurse when she grows up.

Stanley Muendo- He has been in MCC for 10 years and hails from Makindu. Muendo is a total orphan. Muendo wants to be a lawyer in future.

Mwikali Nduku- She has been in MCC for 9 years. Her single parent is mentally disabled. She hails from Twaandu Sub location and wants to further education in the hospitality industry.

Zena Swaleh- She has been in MCC for 10 years. Zena is a total orphan. Through MCC she got a 4 year scholarship with KCB Foundation. She is currently in her final year in high school, with excellent scores in all the exams she has taken. She wants to study Law.

Muthoka Shabaan- He has been in MCC for 10 years. He is a total orphan and wants to be an Accountant.

EDUCATION UPDATE

UNIFORMS: Makindu Children’s Centre supports 937 children in primary school. For the past 3 years most of them have been going to school with torn and ragged uniforms. Others had stitched and re-stitched the uniform to the point that it almost lost the original color. Most of them narrated how they were shy and could not stand in front of people to speak. One child missed school because his uniform was stolen right off the clothesline. When he was issued a new uniform, he resumed school right away. Over the past year we were fortunate to provide 886 children with new school uniforms. This was extremely impactful to the children and provided a much needed boost to their self esteem.

HIGHER EDUCATION: After completing 12 years of primary and secondary school, graduates in Kenya have a variety of choices. If they performed well, they can go to a public college based on their financial standing and scholarship availability. Only the top performers have this option. The second choice is to attend a private college, which costs more and has fewer scholarships. The third choice is to go to a vocational school or join the job market. Eight Makindu Children’s Program sponsored children sat for their Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in 2016, having been fully supported with tuition fees, school transport and learning materials for four years. They are all from extremely vulnerable backgrounds yet their dreams of getting secondary education have been fulfilled. The results of the KCSE exam came out this year and we are thrilled to announce that five of the students qualified to join public universities. Congratulations Beth Francis Nzioka, Emmanuel Mwendwa, Pauline Mutindi, Faith Ngundo and Kyalo Nduku! They have all received their university calling letters. The other three performed well enough to join colleges to pursue diploma courses. Congratulations Muoka Kavithi, Beth Cornelius Mumo and Peter Mbaluka! It is great joy to see the smiles on these children’s faces and the hope in their eyes as they eagerly anticipate the next phase of their lives. These young adults would not have this hope or opportunity were it not for the support of donors like you.

Students receive new uniforms.
Janet Kaluki, a total orphan aged 17, was living with her aunt in Kiboko Town. Janet’s mother and father died when she was very young and she had lived with her maternal aunt since then. Janet had completed her primary school and joined Kibwezi Technical Institute to undertake a course in tailoring.

On 19th November, 2016 she left with other family and church members to attend a relative’s wedding in Loitoktok town. On their way back from the wedding the car hit a giraffe crossing the road. The impact threw Janet partially out of the car and she sustained serious neck, back and spinal injuries. She could not move her limbs or neck, and her legs were completely numb.

The family struggled, held a fundraiser and managed to raise some funds, however it was not enough to her to continue her care. So Janet was transferred to a general ward, with no medication at all, just food. Before she was transferred, she had greatly improved, her feeling had resumed, she could move her fingers.

Friends and supporters of Makindu Children’s Program stepped in to provide funds to continue her medical care. In April, Janet was transferred to the general ward of Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi. She still has not regained any purposeful function in her arms or legs, but has a tiny bit of sensation and can wiggle one finger of her left hand. She can also now lift her left hand to a certain angle. She has multiple bed sores which are infected, and very slow to heal. Although she has no sensation in her arms or legs, her spine in places is still very painful and she continues physiotherapy.

Doctors were on strike in Kenya from January through March and nurses are currently on strike. With these strikes, Janet’s medical treatment has declined, shifting the burden of care back onto her family. Travel to Nairobi from Makindu is neither quick nor easy. Transportation and lodging costs quickly became unaffordable to Janet’s family. To address this need, MCP has rented a small apartment in Nairobi for Janet’s family to stay when visiting her and they are now able to afford a visit with Janet five days a week. When visiting, her family attends to her bed sores, turns her, and provides invaluable emotional support to Janet’s mental state. Before the apartment was rented and family could only stay a day or two, Janet was miserable. She would cry and cry when family left, begging them to stay with her. With this new accommodation, Janet’s emotional health has improved.

The spinal orthopedist believes that surgical stabilization of her spine may be helpful in the future. Unfortunately this next step cannot be undertaken unless her bed sores have all healed, her nutrition status improves, she gains more strength and funds become available. Currently the focus is on her nutrition, treatment of the bed sores, and giving her as much emotional support and love as possible. Although the public hospital is doing a commendable job of caring for her, their resources are minimal. Anything you can do to help Janet and her family would be greatly appreciated. Check on her updates and donate to her cause specifically at the link below: https://www.gofundme.com/CareForJanet.

Janet Kaluki, a total orphan aged 17, was living with her aunt in Kiboko Town. Janet’s mother and father died when she was very young and she had lived with her maternal aunt since then. Janet had completed her primary school and joined Kibwezi Technical Institute to undertake a course in tailoring.

On 19th November, 2016 she left with other family and church members to attend a relative’s wedding in Loitoktok town. On their way back from the wedding the car hit a giraffe crossing the road. The impact threw Janet partially out of the car and she sustained serious neck, back and spinal injuries. She could not move her limbs or neck, and her legs were completely numb.

The family struggled, held a fundraiser and managed to raise some funds, however it was not enough to her to continue her care. So Janet was transferred to a general ward, with no medication at all, just food. Before she was transferred, she had greatly improved, her feeling had resumed, she could move her fingers.

Friends and supporters of Makindu Children’s Program stepped in to provide funds to continue her medical care. In April, Janet was transferred to the general ward of Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi. She still has not regained any purposeful function in her arms or legs, but has a tiny bit of sensation and can wiggle one finger of her left hand. She can also now lift her left hand to a certain angle. She has multiple bed sores which are infected, and very slow to heal. Although she has no sensation in her arms or legs, her spine in places is still very painful and she continues physiotherapy.

Doctors were on strike in Kenya from January through March and nurses are currently on strike. With these strikes, Janet’s medical treatment has declined, shifting the burden of care back onto her family. Travel to Nairobi from Makindu is neither quick nor easy. Transportation and lodging costs quickly became unaffordable to Janet’s family. To address this need, MCP has rented a small apartment in Nairobi for Janet's family to stay when visiting her and they are now able to afford a visit with Janet five days a week. When visiting, her family attends to her bed sores, turns her, and provides invaluable emotional support to Janet’s mental state. Before the apartment was rented and family could only stay a day or two, Janet was miserable. She would cry and cry when family left, begging them to stay with her. With this new accommodation, Janet’s emotional health has improved.

The spinal orthopedist believes that surgical stabilization of her spine may be helpful in the future. Unfortunately this next step cannot be undertaken unless her bed sores have all healed, her nutrition status improves, she gains more strength and funds become available. Currently the focus is on her nutrition, treatment of the bed sores, and giving her as much emotional support and love as possible. Although the public hospital is doing a commendable job of caring for her, their resources are minimal. Anything you can do to help Janet and her family would be greatly appreciated. Check on her updates and donate to her cause specifically at the link below: https://www.gofundme.com/CareForJanet.
Remembering a Father to Makindu

By Winnie Barron, MCC Co-Founder

Bwana Kasee (otherwise known as Mr. Kampana) was an elderly beggar in Makindu, who made his home in a tiny acacia tree along the Nairobi-Mombasa highway just outside of the Sikh Temple. He perched his bed up in the high branches, resting upon several torn strips of a cardboard carton. In his later years he had become too weak and stiff to ascend the tree by himself, and would patiently wait for someone to help him get in and out of the tree each morning and night. Soon even this became too difficult, and he would trudge some kilometers away at the end of the day to sleep in an abandoned goat shed.

This gentleman spent his days begging for shillings outside of the Temple. At the end of each day he would keep only a few shillings for a sparse meal or snack for himself, and would then give all the rest of his collected coins to an 11 year-old street boy named Madona. This boy would then buy whatever food he could find in the shops, and bring his collected goods back to his elderly great grandmother to cook--- to feed all of the children in Madona’s village who had not yet eaten that day.

This was perhaps an unlikely triad of saviors: an elderly beggar, a young street orphan, and a poor and struggling granny, giving virtually all they had to those who had even less. Meeting this man was a blessing and inspiration for me. Surely I thought, we could do something to help these children as well. Thus, MCC was born.

I have known this kind and gentle soul since 1997 when I first visited Makindu, and trusted in his wisdom. He became the eyes and ears of the streets for us at the center, often sending word of a child or family in trouble or distress. The children all knew him well, and whenever there was leftover food at the centre, they would bring it to him at night. He was in a way, the grandfather of all the desperate children of Makindu, and epitomized what represents the spirit of MCC... hope and compassion.

Upon arriving to Makindu a few summers ago, I found him missing from his normal begging place, with his tree-home abandoned. Upon questioning, another street beggar told me that Kasee had apparently gotten ill and died in the hospital a few weeks previously.

I have known few people with more honor and heart than this man. Makindu lost a great soul, but was enriched by his gifts over the years, as were we all.

Happy belated Father’s Day, Bwana Kasee!
GOAT KEEPING SUPPORT GROUPS CONTINUE TO BENEFIT GUARDIAN HOUSEHOLDS

MCC has organized guardians into 20 different support groups in all the 10 outreach sites. One of the successful and growing income-generating projects of these support groups is goat keeping. Each group member is encouraged to contribute a small amount weekly to help buy a few goats for the group. MCC provides assistance in a number of ways, but leaves the group management to the members, only offering technical, advisory and oversight roles.

The goal of the goat project is to economically empower the households of the group members, so that they can intervene and help support children’s immediate and long term needs. The project also creates a forum where the guardians share their challenges and experiences living with orphans and vulnerable children, and encourage and strengthen each other.

Goat keeping has been an on-going project. The groups which started in 2012 now have over 100 goats. The groups meet monthly for updates. At the end of every year, they meet to evaluate their progress, to note the goats born within the year, and hear the treasurer’s presentation on the year’s financials. We partnered with Equity Bank to have the groups trained on basic book keeping skills.

The guardians have an agreement amongst themselves that once any baby goats are born, they are distributed among the members until each member gets a goat. The goat however still belongs to the group. The goats supply the families with milk and manure, and are occasionally sold when need arises, but only with the entire group’s consent. The guardians are then able to better help support the kids with school fees, items necessary to join high school or vocational training, or even food for the very needy households. The groups meet monthly to get updates on the progress of the goats. MCC staff attend such meetings.

Before being issued the goats, all the group members attend a two-day training on goat keeping and management by the county livestock officers. They are sensitized on giving the right feeds, early signs of disease/infection detection, treating the goats with the right medicines, and the best marketing strategy when selling the goats, among other training areas.

PROPER AMAZING RACE
Scavenger Hunt for MCP

On May 20 in Eugene, Oregon, a number of teams scoured the community for clues and raised thousands of dollars in an extravagant scavenger hunt dubbed the Proper Amazing Race. The race started at our lead sponsor’s office, ReMax Integrity, and led participants chasing clues downtown to Saturday Market for a tattoo of our baobab tree logo, to a bare sidewalk for some chalk art and to a myriad of other places in between. Teammates Tori Bendix and Veronica Sullivan won the grand prize of $500, but graciously donated the winnings back to MCP. “We are just happy to have spent a really fun day supporting the kids and this great cause. We can’t wait for the next one!”

THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT SUPPORTERS:
Shebeen Pub & Braai, Makindu Mondays
Hofheimer Building, Reggae on the Roof
Hot Mama’s Wings, International Children’s Day
Oregon Wine Lab, ReJEWEL
ReMax Integrity, Proper Amazing Race
Mighty Joshua, Reggae on the Roof
R3 Engraving and Signs, Proper Amazing Race
Total Hip at Sam Bonds Brewing
Discount Windows, Proper Amazing Race
Belle Isle Craft Spirits, Inc., Reggae on the Roof
Help give these kids HOPE!

Thank you D. Pennell Brooks for many of these great photos.