MAKINDU CHILDREN’S PROGRAM

provides resources to feed, educate, and care for orphans and vulnerable children in eastern Kenya so they can grow and thrive.

MCC ADDS THIRD SOCIAL WORKER

Thanks to the hugely successful 20th Anniversary fundraising tour of 2018, Makindu Children’s Program is in the process of hiring a third social worker, which will increase the quality of care for all the children and their guardians.

The two social workers currently working have been coordinating the services for 565 children and 301 guardian homes in eight different project areas, which span over 30 kilometres.

Undeniably, it is a challenging task to visit each child and guardian home regularly to ensure they are doing well, and to intervene in cases of need and concerns. Adding a third social worker will reduce the caseload, providing the staff more time for attention to detail and improvement of overall care, as well as sooner intervention in cases of crisis. The new social worker will share the current work load of children, and allow them more time to focus especially on children and families in crisis, children failing to thrive, at risk because of extraordinary circumstances, suffering from severe illness or threats (abuse, neglect, rape, etc).

In further support of the social workers and the households, community health volunteers check in at least monthly with each guardian, and report any concerns to the social workers. Additionally, the guardians are divided into 27 support groups that each meet monthly. The guardians are grouped by locality, and each group elects its own chair, treasurer and secretary. These groups offer invaluable emotional support in raising such vulnerable and needy children. They also pool resources to help the neediest of their group, and communicate with the social workers any specific needs, and recommend priority of each need. This collaboration and support strengthens the bond and community of the MCC children and households, as well as the quality of service provided by MCC staff.

Immediate expected results include improved follow up/needs assessment and intervention, especially medical and other pressing individual or home social/psychological needs; better household (guardian/children) connection with the MCC social worker; and improved follow up on any arising issues, e.g. hospital visits/revisits, admission, more swift crisis intervention, etc.

Long term results will be improved beneficiaries’ psychological and over all well being; improved/better intervention on the identified needs; better coordination of care; reduced suffering; and reduced morbidity and mortality.

The current social workers are overjoyed to have an additional colleague, and thank you donors for lightening their caseload and increasing their ability to provide top quality, comprehensive care to all the children.
POETRY BY THE CHILDREN

Many MCC children enjoy writing and reciting poetry. For Safari Welcome Celebrations, the children share their personal stories, such as this touching story below:

MCC IS MY NEW FOUND HOME

2017 will forever remain in my mind
For the longest time in my life
I have lived with my mother and my father but lo!
Something tragic happened
My mother died in 2017

I knew all was lost... I lost all hope
I watched as my father struggled to help us
But he could not do by himself
I can comfortably now say
MCC is my new found home

Days on end I could go to bed hungry
I prayed and prayed and knew a miracle would come my way
Now I am a supported child at MCC
All my hurts are down the drain
I can comfortably say
MCC is my new found home

Donors you are very special people
As a good book says, the hand that gives us receives
I pray that you receive blessing upon blessing
I can comfortably say
MCC is my new found home
GOATS FOR ALL

Good nutrition is key to good health, but difficult to access for the vulnerable populations. The drought has been rampant in this region for well over a decade and famine has persisted. Crops are difficult to grow without adequate water supply, and children often go hungry. Over half of the MCC kids live too far away from the Center to access the daily meals served there and so rely on supplemental bulk food provided to cook at home for proper nutrition. Sometimes this just isn’t enough for adequate nutrition.

With an objective to ensure access to reliable daily nutritional support, we set out to raise funds to buy a goat for every household, to supplement not only the household nutrition, but if excess milk can be sold, supplement household income as well. Partnering with Global Giving, we were able to raise enough funds to provide a pregnant Galla goat to each household of an MCP child. The Galla goat is indigenous to Kenya and considered the milk queen of the arid Kenyan region. For the households infected with HIV, we provided two pregnant goats. To ensure the success of this program, each household attended educational workshops on effective animal husbandry for raising goats. MCP has utilized the expertise of the Kenyan Department of Agriculture to provide the education necessary for our population to properly care for and breed goats in a humane and sustainable fashion. This project has reached approximately 1,500 people (300 households x 5 people average per household) and will continue to provide daily nutrition to all of them.

Outcomes for this project include:

- Nutrition security in every MCP household. Daily nutrition for every household improves the overall health of each family member; improves school attendance and productivity; and helps maintain an adequate and functioning immune system to those infected with HIV.

- Caring for the goats provides valuable skills and responsibility to the children, and nurtures their belonging to the family unit and community.

- Supplementary income from sales of excess milk, cheese or meat helps provide households with money needed for other essentials.

The children and guardians now herd, feed, nurture and milk the goats, utilizing their skills training and actively participating in productive activities within the community. The goat milk provides necessary nutrition and expands food support to the families. Training the local guardians in making and marketing cheese and excess milk to the neighboring area has helped to sustain the families and provide further self-sufficiency.

Thank you to everyone who has supported this successful nutrition project. MCC will continue to provide goats to the neediest of households as necessary.
We continue to ask for your support to fight against malnutrition and starvation in Kenya. This is a time of severe and urgent need, with drought throughout Kenya continuing to have a terrible effect on crops, causing many families to miss meals or greatly reduce normal portions to try and get by. Virtually all of the guardian families served by MCC asked about the possibility of any relief food at their most recent visits. Some younger kids are too weak due to lack of food to make the long walk to schools, or are too weak and fatigued to be alert and do well in their studies. The elderly and children face the greatest risk at this time.

The stories and photos of starvation, suffering and deaths in Western Kenya are overwhelming.

All of the MCC families have been struggling more than their norm with the severe drought, failing crops and lack of food, and doing so with characteristic fortitude and resiliency. Pleading with the government for relief food has been to no avail, and other previous sources of nutritional support from nonprofit groups is not currently reaching Kenya. Imagine mothers telling us that many of them were going without food for days so that their children could eat, and that some of the younger children were too weak to walk the many miles to school, or even focus on their studies if they reached there. And then imagine after sharing these stories, guardians thanking MCC for what it has done for them thus far, and even dancing and singing to us with gratitude. They reliably are laughing when we would be crying, and they continue to both humble and inspire beyond measure.

MCP will continue to offer daily meals at the Center and provide supplementary food to outlying households in our efforts to prevent future malnutrition, but we must emphasize, that at this time the need is very immediate and life threatening to the households we serve. These food programs give the children and guardians adequate nutrition while they pray and hope for the rains to come.
Proper Safari 2019 is August 8 – 19 and promises to be another great adventure. Watch for daily updates on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Board member Michael Farley will again lead the group to Makindu to enjoy a Welcome Celebration at the Children’s Center with hundreds of the kids and guardians, share a special meal together and gather in the shade for poetry, music and dance. The kids especially enjoy performing for the visitors! The service project this year will be building picnic tables. Currently at meals, the kids sit on the benches made by previous safariers and hold their plates in their laps. The picnic tables will be a great improvement for eating, as well as studying, reading and doing crafts. When the service projects are completed, the safariers will travel on to the extinct volcano Mt. Mielu, famed elephant game reserve Tsavo West National Park, Soysambu Conservancy for a 4-day camel trek, and a final game drive at Nakuru National Park.

Safaris and Moore 2019 is September 24 – October 9 and also promises to be another great adventure. Board member Marcia Moore will lead this group. They will enjoy a Welcome Celebration at the Center as well, and then stroll to nearby homes for a personal house tour. The safariers then travel on to the renowned Maasai Mara for 5 days of game drives. Optional add-on excursions include Zanzibar and Rwanda.

- Michael Farley will lead another Proper Safari in August 2020. Spots open.
- Marcia Moore will lead another Safari & Moore in October 2020. Spots open.
- Please email HelpTheKids@makindu.org if you’d like more information on upcoming safaris.
- Safaris include an unforgettable welcome celebration with the kids, guardians, staff and friends of Makindu Children’s Centre. JOIN ONE SOON!
Electricity is unreliable and expensive in Kenya. In Makindu town the power often goes out for a few hours during business days, causing inconvenient disruptions and loss in productivity. Last spring the power was out for an entire week. The Kenyan electric utility has increased rates 15-20% the last couple of years, yet delivers spotty unreliable service. Thankfully, Eugene supporter Brian Obie and his family, the Waconia Rotary Club in Minnesota, and other individual donors provided funds to upgrade the administrative buildings and borehole to solar power, taking Makindu Children’s Center off the grid.

Besides saving in electricity costs and lost productivity, benefits of solar power on campus include:

- **Borehole**: now off the grid, and reliably pumping water for use in irrigation, washing and cooking. Unlike the rest of the county and region, we have healthy crops growing in our garden.
- **Main Office**: allows administration to perform daily duties uninterrupted, better serving the 565 children enrolled in the program.
- **Computer Lab**: allows the Computer Lab to operate more hours and more reliably. The internet connection is now stable and strong. Extremely popular with the children, seven laptops provide access to computer learning. This year’s Proper Safari will be taking more laptops for the lab, increasing access.
- **Winnie Academy**: The preschool now enjoys solar lighting and fans making the day more comfortable. Solar power has also enabled the teacher to use electric aids more reliably.
- **Dining hall**: Solar power allows the Dining Hall and Kitchen to be open and accessible more hours, thereby serving more children and their guardians, with fans running to add comfort.
- **Washrooms**: Solar power now lights the washrooms, adding safety and accessibility.
- **Security Lights**: Solar powered perimeter fencing lights now provide better security to the 7-acre campus.

Saturdays at the Center have become quite popular with hundreds of kids coming to launder their clothes, eat a healthy meal, shower, play with their friends, check-in with MCC staff, dance and sing to a brand new donated stereo system, and visit the computer lab. This solar project has helped strengthen the bonds of our Makindu family and increased the community support and awareness of our effective, successful, valuable program. Thank you to all who helped bring solar power to Makindu Children’s Center!
It is with such sorrow that we announce the passing of Catherine Kioko, who has been a long-time friend and advisor to MCC, long term MCC Board member, and current Board vice chair. Prior to her retirement, Catherine worked for many years as a social worker in both Makindu and in her home town of Kibwezi, and selflessly volunteered her services through her church and multiple local aid agencies.

I first met this remarkable lady in 1997 when I was assigned to work at the Makindu Hospital, and was lucky enough to be one of many that she adopted under her wing. She was considered our “first Kenyan mama”. She has remained a loyal friend for over 20 years and was a legend in her own right: reliably a fierce advocate for children, and ever caring; she was truly dedicated and tireless in helping those in need.

This lady was feisty and tenacious, and always willingly shared her warm heart, determination and caring hands, and maintained an irrepressible sense of glee and joy in everything she did. Her love of life and oh my... that laugh of hers... were absolutely contagious! Her cooking was simply the best, infused with her own unique spices and love, and she had a natural knack and love of plants. All living beings thrived under this woman’s care. Foremost, this lady was truly a forever champion for children.

We intend to continue her legacy and honor her by always, always advocating for the children. It was women like Catherine that helped establish MCC from its inception, and without her and so many like her, the program would not have become a success.

We send our deepest condolences to her family, and to all of her many, many friends. She will never be forgotten.

Thank you, Catherine. You have been an inspiration to me, and I am happy and honored to have shared many tears and much laughter with you over the years. May there be an ongoing supply of joy and laughter, and if you have your way, plenty of irio, muthokoi and chai for you in heaven...

You have graciously shared your home and heart with so many, and filled our stomachs time and time again over the years. I can promise that you will forever continue to fill our hearts!

By Winnie Barron, Co-Founder

MORE MILK FOR THE KIDS!

Thelma Mae, the beloved dairy cow that provides daily nutritious milk to the children at the Center has given birth to another calf. We are pleased to welcome Kelitu, meaning young girl in Kiswahili, to the Makindu family. They will both be nurtured and cared for, and in return will dutifully and reliably provide milk for hundreds of kids.
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Thank you D. Pennell Brooks for many of these great photos.