

November, 2013



### St. Francis Class of 2013

Dear Friends of Kenya Help,

This November we celebrated the graduation of our 4<sup>th</sup> class from St. Francis Xavier Secondary School for Girls (SFG). The Form 4's (above) have just completed their national exam, the Kenya Curriculum Secondary Exam or KCSE, and will return home to await the results, usually posted in February. The top performers, those with, A, A- or B+, will be eligible for regular admission to a government university at discounted tuition. Those who score in the B, B- or C + may be admitted to the university in what is called a parallel admission, at a much higher cost. Thus the incentive to perform well is high and the girls have worked so hard! Principal, Ruth Kahiga, reports she and the staff are very pleased with the results of the 2013 academic year.



This summer marked the second time an American high school student attended SFG. Maya McAuliffe, Margo's granddaughter, spend 3 ½ weeks as a form 3 student and had a life-changing experience. Coming from Palo Alto High School, with all its privileges and freedom of movement, to a much more restricted environment, sharing a dorm room with five girls, eating unfamiliar food, having very long days in class---8 am to 9 pm with just a few breaks, hand-washing clothes and taking cold showers was a true cultural shock. It was a hard transition for her, but she adjusted well and in the end she was very positive and declared she wanted to go back. She's pictured wearing a Form 1 uniform, waiting to perform at the talent show.

St. Francis continues its efforts to be energy efficient, self-sustaining, and eco-friendly. In July we celebrated the completion of the borehole (well) and the solar powered pump, all funded by a Kenya Help donor. Since the water is naturally highly fluoridated it must be processed for all cooking and drinking purposes. Installation of a defluoridation system, also funded by Kenya Help, now provides top quality water and saves money besides.

Water harvested from roofs during the rainy season is stored in a huge underground cistern and is used for washing and irrigation.

Our next project is to build storage for basic foodstuffs. Once it is in place, wheat, maize, rice and beans can be locally purchased (reducing transportation costs). Buying a full year supply at harvest time, when prices are low, will be another great money saver. A flour grinder for making the bread will be installed in the storage structure, completing the full process.

In addition to our support of SFG, our donors have contributed to the renovation of Archbishop Ndingi Secondary School for Boys. Some major improvements have been completed, such as painting all the classrooms, making them much brighter, and installing ceilings. The ceilings greatly reduce the noise of African rains pounding on the roof. Previously it was impossible to be heard during a storm. More improvements are in the planning stage, awaiting approval by the appropriate governmental departments.

The governing boards of both high schools are making every effort to keep the fees as low as possible, but adverse weather conditions and rising petrol prices have caused food costs to increase substantially. Kenya Help supports many students whose families are unable to bear the increase. Our sponsors now pay \$800 per year, which covers tuition, room and board, text books, exercises books, fees for the national exam and other expenses.

As more of our students graduate from the high schools, we hope to increase Kenya Help's support of more students to attend university. Many students have great potential but lack any means of support. The Kenyan government does help by providing a low cost loan program with no interest charged while the student is in school. Payments are automatically deducted from salaries when the student is gainfully employed. All Kenya Help post-secondary scholarship recipients are required to obtain a loan.



In May, Kenya Help sponsored a concert featuring the Brubeck Institute Quartet from University of the Pacific. It was a wonderful afternoon of jazz and camaraderie and was enthusiastically enjoyed by our guests.

Fr. Kiriti's October/November visit this year was marked by the first of what we hope will be an annual Kenya Help benefit breakfast, held at the University Club of Palo Alto. Fr. Kiriti shared his experiences in his new parish of Kositei, outlining the need for support of a medical clinic in this very rural, remote area. Margo read quotes from some of our sponsored students and Maya shared the highs and the lows of her summer experience. It was a lovely event and we are so grateful to our donors who helped to make it a success.

As always we are so grateful for the ongoing support from our donors. St. Francis is completely built and is self-sustaining. Our primary fund-raising goal for this year is for the scholarship program, which we hope to expand. We also accept donations to support Fr. Kiriti's work in Kositei.

We are saddened by the death of Jecinta Gakaku, social worker for the Naivasha Catholic Parish and tireless worker for all children. She wore many hats, including responsibility for *Mji Wa Neema* children's home, as well as determining which students were eligible for Kenya Help scholarships. Her shoes can never be filled, but we are confident that a replacement will be found for some of her roles. She was a good friend to all who visited Naivasha, always so willing to give advice, guide us somewhere, help with purchasing crafts and help us all to understand the culture of the community. She passed away on November 4 after a short illness. She leaves two daughters, Marian and Jecinta, both in Class 8 (elementary school), and currently completing the national exam for high school admittance.



*Margo*

Warm regards to you all,  
Margo McAuliffe and the Kenya Help Board