

# 2016 Fall Newsletter

Supporting women and youth in Kenya

P. O. Box 516  
Menlo Park, CA 94026

November 2016

## What do we need?

As we do each fall, we are reporting our Kenya Help progress for 2015. We are deeply grateful to our donors for current and past support. As you read you will see our need to continue this support, particularly for the children of *Mji Wa Neema* children's home.

It costs approximately \$800 per year to support a child in high school, more if that child is from *Mji Wa Neema*. For those we must supply all the things parents are expected to supply, such as bedding, personal items, books, pocket money, transport to and from school for holidays

University or other post secondary institutions vary from a high of about \$7000 for fees and upkeep to \$2000. Some courses are 3 years but most are 4 (even 5). Right now all but 2 of the *Mji Wa Neema* residents are in high school or beyond. One has completed school and is working as a community health worker.



Lucas's new teeth

The 2 still in the home are Joseph, class 5, and Lucas, class 8. We have high hopes for Lucas, who is quite bright. We hope by the time he leaves to enter high school more children

will have been taken in to the home. It would be very hard on Joseph to be alone with just the matron, Julia.

In addition, we must replace the original computers at St. Francis Girls, purchased in 2008 or 2009. They have broken down for a variety of reasons and are too old anyway. We need 20 for the computer lab and another 5 for use by teachers. The school will need to support wi-fi, which it now lacks.

Originally we had hoped to find rehabbed computers donated by companies that are upgrading. That has proved difficult. In the meantime, Kenya is clamping down on used items entering the country, charging a high VAT. We've concluded the best course of action is to purchase them in-country, where they will be made for 210V rather than our 120V.

There are other reasons as well for that decision. We have come to it reluctantly, but now see it as the best solution. Right now there are no computers in our beautiful lab!

The full cost to equip the

school would be in the \$12,000 to \$15,000 range, which would include setting up the lab, paying a tech consultant to come on a



Girls working math together

regular basis to make sure they are running, and load the necessary software.

Our goal for 2017 is to provide scholarship support for 20 more high school students, at a cost of \$16,000 and to send more students to university. That cost is hard to estimate, as the cost depends on which school and which major. Our estimate is \$50,000. This is in addition to continuing support for our currently sponsored students. That is about \$100,000 per year.

Our expenses are very low, about 5% in 2015. We estimate we will need, in total, about \$225,000. This is a very ambitious goal for us. With your help, we can do it.

—Margo McAuliffe, Executive Director, Kenya Help

## Kenya Help March 13th Gala:

On March 13th Kenya Help celebrated its 10th year and Margo her 80th birthday. A gala was held at the local community center attended by 150 Kenya Help supporters. Margo's family and friends, along with community members, former students, donors and ex-board members joined together to celebrate a remarkable woman and the power of a dream.

Margo's first friend was there, her sister Sue Smith, as were the first two donors, her son Mark and daughter Susan. Margo said she looked around in overwhelming gratitude for the elegant gathering that had brought together so many wonderful people from so many different backgrounds and parts of her life. Everywhere she saw generous spirits who have allowed her to do the work she most loves, helping to educate youths in Africa. She looked out on a richness of life she could never have imagined for herself and was profoundly humbled by what Kenya Help has given her.

Testimonials were read from Saint Francis Girls' School co-founder, Fr. Kiriti, and from students. A video loop showed a visual history of Kenya Help's work over the last 10 years. Guests

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## Green initiative achieved at St. Francis Girls':

Since its beginning, St. Francis Girls School has been eco-friendly. It is a leader on this issue, not just in Kenya, but probably globally.

Margo, whom you know is a fierce recycler and plastic bag foe, envisioned a green campus from the day the

much of the school. Of course vegetables are grown organically.

But for years one thing has been missing. As you may know, sanitation is a huge issue in many developing areas around the world. There is often no water supply, sanitation system, or

contest it sponsored for toilets!

But Margo has had an idea about solving this problem for years. Each summer when she visited she was appalled by the odors issuing from the girls' bathroom. The facilities are standard pit toilets, but the space to receive the waste is too small and was improperly constructed. Walking by is not pleasant.

Margo had seen and researched a biogas digester. This system takes waste and turns into useable energy. Here is a description from SimGas:

*The main part of a biogas system is a large tank, or digester. Inside this tank, bacteria convert organic waste into methane gas through the process of anaerobic digestion. Each day, the operator of a biogas system feeds the digester with household by-products such as market waste, kitchen waste, and manure from*

*livestock. The methane gas produced inside biogas system may be used for cooking, lighting, and other energy needs. Waste that has been fully digested exits the biogas system in the form of organic fertilizer.*

This works for all waste, not just animal waste, she learned several years ago when she visited St. Luke's hospital, which has a much older biogas system. Perhaps a greater benefit is vastly reducing the trees cut down to be burned for cooking. Using biogas not only reduces deforestation but also the resulting air pollution.

After several years of pushing for this, biogas is on the way. Those of you who celebrated Margo's big birthday know that this was what she wished for. Some of us might yearn for something more personal, but not Margo! The system should in operation by the time you read this.-

—Mary Anne Rodgers



Margo inspecting the biogas installation.

plans were drawn, as did Father Kiriti. The school has its own well, with solar-powered pumps. Separate solar panels and wind mills create energy that runs

method to remove waste. You might be interested that many entrepreneurs are trying to fix this problem. See the Gates Foundation website for a



Alison Staab tutoring at SFG.

## St. Francis Girls': A visitor's view:

Last summer, I spent a few weeks in Naivasha with Margo, staying at Mji Wa Neema Children's Home and tutoring math to students at St. Francis Girls' High School.

Classes in Kenya are taught in English, so language was not a problem. The students at SFG are expected to do a lot of the work to maintain the school – for example, I saw groups of girls washing the

floor after classes and washing the pots used in the dining hall. The campus was clean and tidy; dorms were clean and very neat.

St. Francis is a boarding school and the students have a punishing schedule: they wake up between 4:00 and 5:00 a.m.; bedtime is at 9:15 for forms 1 & 2 and at 10:30 for forms 3 & 4; the whole day is tightly scheduled with

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## Mji Wa Neema Reunion:

Our 2015 reunion of children at *Mji Wa Neema*, (children’s home) in St. Francis Xavier Parish was so popular, we decided it would be an annual event, to be held in August when the students are on holiday. Margo is still in Kenya at that time—and frequently some US visitors are present as well.

Of the original 30+ children who were at *Mji Wa Neema* when Margo first arrived in 2005, only 2 young boys now live there. (In recent years, extended families were encouraged to keep their children, rather than releasing them to an orphanage.) Most of the children came back for the reunion. By now they are young adults, launching into the world, working, studying and building their own lives. But *Mji Wa Neema* called them back.

Kenya Help Board Member Judy Murphy took up the cause of *Mji Wa Neema* in a special way—not just the children but the institution

as well. She inspired her community in Portland OR to support the home. They did so in many ways—with funding improvements to the home, with sponsorships of individual children, and with deep commitment to staying the course.



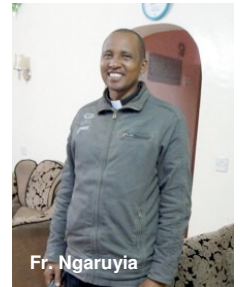
Patrick, home from his first year of teacher education in math and science

At this year’s reunion, there were 2 goats to eat, the preparation of which is almost ritualistic. Margo recorded it thoroughly, except for the slaughter. Having fed her food scraps to the goats for a month, she didn’t have the stomach for it, but eating it was a different story! It was delicious!

Early on the appointed day, the older boys constructed a fire pit, using some wire mesh and rocks. After the meat was boiled, it was put on the grill and carefully attended by the boys (no, not the girls). Fr. Kiriti and Anthony, one of the founders of the children’s home, added their suggestions, but Fr. Jeff, one of the new parish priests, claimed overall supervision.

Recertification of the home is underway, having been allowed to lapse under the previous church leaders. In addition to filling out forms every 3 years, a social

worker must be on staff. You may recall that the parish social worker, our beloved Jecinta Gakahu, died three years ago, but her vacant position was never filled. Only because the director of Children’s Affairs in Naivasha is a friend of the parish was *Mji Wa Neema* allowed to remain open, but no new children could be taken in.



Fr. Ngaruyia

The new pastor of the parish, Fr. Ngaruyia, has arranged for a new nun/social worker. All the paperwork for recertification has been submitted to the office of Children’s Affairs. We expect a positive decision in January or February.



Fr. Kiriti and Anthony reminiscing about the early years.

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very little free time. Classes meet six days a week. Besides classes, studying, chores, and prayer, the students do service projects on occasion: for example, a group of girls visited the local women’s prison one Saturday while we were there.

In the classrooms, the students are attentive and well-behaved. While we

were there, the Form 4 (12th grade) students were busy preparing for the all-important KSCE, the high school exit exam given in November. The math portion is five hours long (given in two parts) and covers all four years of high school!

Kenyan students take this test very seriously, as their future depends on how well they perform. Already

by June, all the seniors were busy working problems from past exams. The tutoring sessions Margo and I held in the library proved very popular as students came to ask questions and make sure they understood how to solve the problems. Students also held their own tutoring sessions where a girl needing help to understand a topic would find others quick to

offer that help. The girls at St. Francis are animated, enthusiastic, and proud to be part of their school’s community. They are optimistic and hopeful about their futures. The lessons they are learning about taking responsibility, about perseverance, and cooperating with others will serve them well!

—Alison Staab



Supporting women and youth in Kenya

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Flora Sullivan, President  
Kay Williams, Secretary

**Members:**

Njeri (Jane) Albrecht.  
Rev. Daniel Kiriti  
Judy Murphy  
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Mary Anne Rodgers  
Alison Staab  
Deepa Shiva



**Margo McAuliffe, Executive Director**

Margo's past blogs can be found at [www.kenyahelp.us](http://www.kenyahelp.us). To receive posts of the 2017 blog (beginning in June), send email to [deepashiva@gmail.com](mailto:deepashiva@gmail.com)

Phone: 650-322-0821  
Email: [margo@kenyahelp.us](mailto:margo@kenyahelp.us)

**Julia Gatwiri to visit in January:**

Julia Gatwiri (pronounced "Ju-LEE-a"), wonderful matron of *Mji Wa Neema*, "Mom" to all 35 children who have lived there, and very good friend to Judy and Margo, as well as to our US visitors each summer,



**Julia Garwiri at the *Mji Wa Neema* reunion in August 2016 with the oldest resident, Cyrus, who is soon to complete 5 years of pharmacy school.**

is coming to Menlo Park in January.

When Julia received her visa from the US embassy, her excitement was uncontainable. Getting the visa is always a stumbling block for Kenyans, but she sailed right through the process.

We will be announcing events at which she will speak via our email network. If you are not on the blog list, but would like to know about Julia's visit, please email Margo to add your name. Be sure to specify whether you wish to receive Margo's summer blog as well: [margo@kenyahelp.us](mailto:margo@kenyahelp.us).

**March 13th Gala (continued):**

watched the school grow from raw buildings to today's green, more self sufficient school, recognized regionally as the 2014



**Margo & sister Sue Smith**

Most Child Friendly School in the District (like a state). High-



**Margo with daughter & granddaughter, Susan and Kate Wiczynski**

lights showed campus life at SFG and the achievements of Kenya Help scholarship students from both the school and from *Mji Wa Neema*. The guests could see how their support of Margo's dream and Kenya Help's mission has changed the lives of more than 150 youths in Naivasha, Kenya. It was a bountiful celebration for all.

—Flora Sullivan

**Kenya Help Joins 21st Century:**

**Credit Card donations:**

In addition to accepting Pay Pal donations on our website ([www.kenyahelp.us](http://www.kenyahelp.us)) we can now accept credit card donations in person and hope soon to add that convenience to our website.

Additionally we have established a Schwab account for those who wish to donate stock. Our account number is 4385-3820.

For donors over 71 1/2 who want to reduce their RMD, non-taxable direct donations from an IRA to Kenya Help are now possible, thanks to a new provision passed by the US senate about 1 year ago. Simply contact your IRA fund and make the request. They will send a check, made out to Kenya Help, to the donor, who can then send it to us at PO Box 516, Menlo Park, CA 94026.

**AmazonSmile:**

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