



Empower the World Board meeting:

The board members of Empower the World (ETW) held their regular meeting in July, at a time Margo and Alison were in Naivasha and able to attend. ETW is our partner NGO in Kenya, which identifies deserving students and manages the scholarships. Kenya Help's role is mainly to raise funds. ETW has been in existence since 2012, but their precursor organization sponsored students from 2006 to 2012. Over 200 students have benefited from Kenya Help/ETW scholarships.

ETW responsibilities include:

- Identifying and vetting prospective student beneficiaries, and helping the families apply;
- Examining applications, deciding which students will be awarded scholarships;
- Following students' progress, and providing mentoring if needed;
- Paying students' fees on time, directly to the schools;
- Raising funds locally, focusing on past beneficiaries who have completed their schooling;
- Encouraging scholarship graduates to mentor current students.

Mji Wa Neema student completes university!!

It was truly an historic day when David Mungai graduated from Jomo Kenyatta University--the first of the Mji Wa Neema youth to complete university. He is now a public health officer, employed by the Naivasha water agency to perform tests on water throughout the area.

David is very interested in the issue of natural hyper-fluoridation of the underground water and how to remove the excess. He tells us, "I have come to find it an inspiring practice and also serving as a useful scaffolding for my thoughts on the role of a Public Health Officer."



Here is David with his Mji brother, Cyrus, who graduates next year with a degree in pharmacy. We celebrated at a local hotel in Thika with a lovely garden setting.

One of the first things David did after being employed was to rent his own apartment in Naivasha and begin to furnish it. By August, he had a bed, table and chair, a few basic utensils and a "jiko" on which to cook. We are so proud of David for leading the way.

Traditions continue:

During Margo's visit this summer another tradition continued. After Judy introduced a special dinner for the Mji Wa Neema kids, the idea continued each summer. The first year, Judy brought 40 pairs of chopsticks to give the children at the children's home the idea of a different meal and a different experience. The shopping for noodles, chicken, soy sauce and spices had been quite successful.

That first dinner was a hit. It was followed by other dinners.

This year, Margo and Alison decided to host a pizza dinner. On a shopping trip, Alison had spied a pizza place in the central area of Naivasha. Four pizzas were ordered, there being only a few kids home from school at the time. Everyone was delighted to try them. Margo says they were quite poor by U. S. pizza standards with little tomato sauce and no cheese—a Hawaiian pizza with one small piece of canned pineapple per slice and pepperoni of origin about which she did not want to inquire. But most of the Mji kids had never had pizza. They loved it.

Afterwards, every slice gone, Margo realized she should have doubled the order!

We need your help:

Some of you joined the Kenya Help dream as early as 2005! We would love to know your thoughts about what it has meant to you to walk the path with us. What were your hopes? Have they been fulfilled? Do you have hopes/dreams for the future of Kenya Help?

Secondly, we need to expand our board. The job is as big or small as each member makes it. Some current members are very busy and can't do much more than attend our monthly meetings, giving us their wisdom. Some are able to help with craft fairs--organizing, setting up, marking items, or making suggestions about items we should look for in the Kenyan markets etc.. Many have their own ideas and resources. Unlike many boards, membership does not require a financial commitment. We want your brain, heart and strong arms.

Thirdly, we need to expand awareness of Kenya Help. Do you know organizations where Margo could speak? This could be a service club, social club, book club, retirement home, neighborhood group. People have found the Kenya Help story interesting; some have found it worthy of their support. We promise not to do a heavy "ask", but just tell people how they can contribute. We just want people to hear our story.



Board members tell their Kenya Help stories:

Alison Staab

Many times my friends Mary and Craig Noke spoke about a Kenyan priest named Fr. Kiriti, and a woman named Margo who built a high school for girls in Kenya. They also spoke about their own experiences in that country and my curiosity was roused! Eventually I attended an informational talk by Fr. Kiriti during one of his US visits, learned more about what Kenya Help is doing in Naivasha, and was inspired to get involved with the group. Since then I've been fortunate to visit Kenya twice with Kenya Help. I've met a lot of wonderful young persons while staying at Mji Wa Neema Children's Home, and have gotten some perspective on what it's like to be a teenager--or to be anyone--living in Kenya. Tutoring students at St. Francis High School has enabled me to learn about the Kenyan education system. I've visited an organization that serves sex workers who want to change their lives and met a nun in remote East Pokot who has implemented an alternative Coming of Age Ceremony that does not require the young women to undergo the traditional genital mutilation.

Deepa Shiva

I met Margo at a TEDx in 2011, shortly after I lost my Dad and while I was questioning existence and purpose. When Margo spoke about Kenya Help, she not only moved me with the

story, but the whole audience stood and gave her a standing ovation. The genuineness in Margo's talk stuck with me and I decided to write to her. After a few e-mail exchanges, we met in person. Eventually I got to know more about her and her dedication to improving the lives of children in Kenya. I joined the Kenya Help board in 2011, helping with some technology work and raising funds. Being born and brought up in India, I was acutely aware of poverty around me and the socio-economic disadvantage it brings. I constantly had an itch, feeling the need to work in a developing country as a way to give back. Working with Kenya Help and making a difference in a child's life is for me one of the most fulfilling ways to give back. After hearing the heart-breaking story of losing their mother to HIV, I decided to support Lucas and Joseph. These kids are brilliant and full of life and I'm committed to giving them a good education.

Flora Sullivan

It is a joy to be on KH's board. We are a strong team fortunate enough to be making an impact in far-away Naivasha, Kenya from the comfort of Margo's den. The fruit of our work is helping youths we don't know, but whom we've all come to care about deeply, thanks to Margo's annual tutoring visits and the visits of other board members. The skills, talent and humor of our board members mesh beautifully so

that my main job is to get us through the monthly meeting agenda on time. Everyone knows his or her tasks and contributes generously. Having Kenyan board members helps immensely to put issues in context. They have brought their culture into our decisions in a way that strengthens our work and makes us appreciate even more the work our generous donors make possible. Finally, my favorite local part is helping with the craft fairs and sharing the story of each item with appreciative buyers.

Judy Murphy

Kenya Help changed my life. The first time I visited St. Francis Xavier Parish in Naivasha, the church had benches, but the orphans of Mji Wa Neema had no tables or chairs at which to eat their meals, and their shoes were worn out hand-me-downs. Their love of each other and joy in just living was a real testament that poverty was not the worst thing that could happen. Being on the Northwest Pilot Project board (Portland, OR) gave me a place to exchange ideas to raise money for the kids needs. The children are growing up: only one is in elementary school; the rest are in high schools and universities, working hard so they can make a difference in others' lives. The KH Board's fund raising has made the difference in many lives. In my estimation the Board has been the back bone of Kenya Help. From the very beginning, Margo had the support of the Board regarding fundraising, community support, ideas, emotional support, hours of work planning fund

raisers, acquisition of local crafts, etc. The Board allows Margo to do her work in Kenya knowing she has the support at home to depend on. It is a group of hard working intelligent people who believe in Kenya Help and Margo's abilities to carry out our mission.

Kay Williams

I knew Fr. Kiriti from my church group, the Thomas Merton Center of Palo Alto, back in the late 90s, when he was at Santa Clara University taking courses in pastoral and youth ministry. In 2005, when my dear friend Margo had retired from teaching and was then a widow, she and I talked a lot on our daily walks about her desire to teach math in Africa.

I connected her with Fr. Kiriti, who was always asking our church group to send volunteers. And the rest is history! Since Kenya Help was formed in 2006, I've been on the Board as secretary, taking minutes of the meetings, designing the annual newsletter, helping with the nuts and bolts of mailing labels and tax letters and brochure production and signage at events. It's been a joy to do what I love to do side by side with my friend for a greater good than either of us ever imagined would result from that casual conversation so many years ago.

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Reunion of Empower the World grant recipients:

Since the inception of Kenya Help (KH) and Empower the World (ETW) it has been Father Kiriti's wish that Kenyans would take on the work we currently fund. To date there has been little network to facilitate this. In the Kenyan culture family members, neighbors or friends get support, but not strangers. Breaking through those cultural mores has proved difficult, but boards of both KH and ETW have explored how the more than 200 young people we have supported can help.

To this end, Hillary Agisa, ETW social worker, organized the first annual beneficiary meeting. Although finding contact information was problematic, more than 80 attended the meeting. Several were surprised at the number we support. They thought there were few and some felt isolated. Several shared their hopelessness upon successfully passing the class 8 exit exam (KCPE), knowing their families could not pay high school fees. Some of those very students have now completed university. Some have jobs, while others still search. As in many places, having connections is vital to getting a job, and given their families' financial situations, few have those

connections.

One of the main goals was to introduce the idea of giving back. Margo, Hillary and Fr. Kiriti had no idea how the concept would be received, but as they discussed the benefits to bright, needy young people and how regular contributions, even small amounts would make a difference,



Margo and Kizito

heads began to nod in agreement. The students expressed their gratitude that unknown people had made donations to support their education. They expressed their willingness to "pay it forward." Margo wrote at the time, with a combination of relief and pride, "They got it. They really got it." The students elected Calestor Kizito to lead the group. He

was one of the first students sponsored by Kenya Help. He had completed high school and was then supported by KH/ETW to earn a degree in computer science, graduating first in his class in 2012. He had several lean years searching for a job, but now he is a bank manager in Nairobi. Years ago this gifted artist donated the series of watercolor sketches adorning Kenya Help notecards.

We asked the students to share their stories of what their education means to them. Kizito's was the first to arrive. In his note to his sponsor he said: "I trust that you are doing well, I still have your letters and a picture of you that constantly remind me where I

came from and I have to admit, I have missed you. I miss to hear from you and how your family is doing. Much has happened, lots of ups and downs in life as I fumbled my ways around chasing for a stable life. I do thank God and the same gratitude I extend to you because out of this I have realised personal growth and career growth as well. I am growing and becoming better every day. I am currently an IT Project Manager at Sidian Bank, a Tier 2 bank in Kenya owned by the biggest wealth management firm in East Africa. This position has exposed me to a lot and I have met amazing people. I believe this is a stepping stone that could lead to opportunities for the members of ETW who are finishing college, as well as opportunities to support ETW through funding to spread its wings further."

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Margo McAuliffe

Each year at this time my thoughts turn to what has been achieved and what remains to be done. Our major goal has been to provide education, particularly for the children of Mji Wa Neema children's home. I am happy to report that is moving along well. The youngest, Joseph, 5th grade, is in a boarding school and doing very well. His brother, Lucas has just completed his first year at Archbishop Ndingi High School. One girl and 2 boys will begin their 4th (and last) year of high school in January. The remaining Mji "children" are

either in university, college, training institute or have moved on into adulthood. David Mungai was the first to complete university, with a bachelor in public health. He is employed by the Naivasha Water Board to test water sources. He hopes to save his money to return to medical school to earn his MD. Cyrus Kariuki will finish with a degree in pharmacy in spring. In September 2005, when I first went to Naivasha, Cyrus was in high school and the rest were a sea of 35 shaved heads and smiling faces. It took several years for me to put names to faces and to sort out personalities. Now they are 33 wonderful individuals, each moving toward a dream. Queen died about 5 years ago and Magdalene died 2 years ago, each of a condition with which she was born. It's quite a family and indeed, it has taken a village--Naivasha, our Kenya Help community, Fr. Kiriti and his successors in Naivasha parish. All of us has had a hand in bringing these orphans to adulthood! We're not finished, but we've come a long way.

Mary Anne Rodgers

I first met Margo years ago when she was tutoring my son. I liked her warmth and positive attitude towards her students. As I got to know her better I learned the story of Kenya Help. I was taken by the way in which Margo and a few others began a journey that now involves many people and has improved an untold number of lives.

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Kenya Help Board of Directors

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Kay Williams, Secretary

Members:

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



**Margo
McAuliffe,
Executive
Director**

See Margo's past blogs at www.kenyahelp.us. To receive posts of the 2017 blogs (beginning in June), email to deepashiva@gmail.com.

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Sign up at smile.amazon.com, choose Kenya Help as your donee, and Amazon donates .5% of your purchase to KH, without adding to your cost.

If you are 70 1/2, look into donating your RMD to a charity. You don't pay tax on that money—ever, and it reduces your end-of-the-year amount, so reduces your RMD for next year. Just call your IRA provider and ask about this bit of tax savings.

Fr. Kiriti's visit in October:



My visit in the Bay Area this October was short and quiet by design. I was very tired from parish

work and I wanted to rest--this being the only time I am on leave.

Quiet though the time was, I had the opportunity to interact with friends, especially those of the Thomas Merton Center community. The highlight was the presentation at Our Lady of the Rosary church on October 21, when I shared on my work in the Kositei mission of rural East Pokot in comparison with my current appointment in suburban St. Paul Wanyororo. In the presentation I talked on the impact of each assignment on me and the many lessons I learned as a person from each.

I also did a presentation at Rotary Club of Menlo Park on the political situation in Kenya. I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to explain to the Rotarians the situation of current politics in Kenya. --Fr. Daniel Kiriti

SFG graduation 2017:

Form 4 high school students all over Kenya completed the national exam in late November. Among them were the 68 from St. Francis Secondary School for Girls (SFG), built by Kenya Help donations, opened in 2007, completed in 2012. This year's graduates will bring the total of girls completing their education at SFG to over 400. This is our ongoing contribution to education of girls in Kenya. Exam results will be out in February, after which those who qualify for further education will begin the application process. In the meantime, academic year 2018 will begin in January. And so it goes...

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I had read and learned a great deal about the importance of education, particularly for girls who, in developing countries, may have few opportunities to go to school. When a girl gets an education beyond the early primary grades it helps her to get a better job, delay marriage, and delay early childbearing. When that educated girl does have children, her children are likely to be healthier and to go on to get a better education themselves. But getting an education does not just help the girl; it helps her family and her community. When girls are educated along with boys the prosperity of the country increases. So I loved learning the story of how Margo met Father Kiriti and rose to the challenge to raise money for a girls' school. My family has sponsored several students, boys and girls, and supported the other work of Kenya Help. My daughter and I visited the school a few years ago and were delighted to meet the students. The stories in Margo's blog came alive as we walked the streets of Naivasha, went to the market, and saw the room where

she stayed. We saw the stark options for poor people and the impact of the work done by Kenya Help, thanks to all of you.

Njeri Albrecht

A fellow Kenyan invited me to a fund raiser for Kenya Help, a group that I did not know at all. What set apart KH from other organizations I have donated to is its low overhead and the annual visits by Margo to Kenya which are chronicled as a blog. Besides my donation, I was updated on what was happening on the ground once Margo landed in Naivasha --how cool is that! The more I went to KH fundraisers and listened to Margo tell her story, the more I was challenged as a Kenyan to be a part of this great organization and give back. As a stay-at-home mom, raising two young kids, I have had to set time a side to attend meetings, try to reach out to my community to get involved and also educate my kids about giving back to the community.

Peter Ojany

I joined Kenya Help in 2015 after having heard a lot about the organization. I met Margo a few years before and was impressed at how much she had done for many students in Naivasha. I met Fr. Kiriti through Margo at a breakfast and it was at that first meeting that again I felt that this group of people was doing great things in Kenya. After a brief conversation with Margo, I decided that I could not pass on the opportunity to be a part of Kenya Help. We continue to sponsor many students each year. Some have gone on to get good jobs, others are in university now and a number of generations are right behind them. These students will be leaders in their own fields in the future. And somewhere down the line, they too will inspire and help others. It is a network of great possibilities and the chance to improve many lives. It's a small part in the grand scheme of things, but it has a very powerful and lasting impact. I continue to be amazed at how much can be given and how many lives can be positively impacted by the good deeds we can all do for our communities.