



# Makindu Children's Centre

A project of the Makindu Children's Program –

A not-for-profit NGO operating in Makindu, Kenya

Headquartered in Brownsville, Oregon – Established 1998.

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## March 1999 Newsletter

### A Visit with Winnie

*Come and visit with Winnie on Sunday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, from 2:00- 4:00 PM in the gym of the former Brownsville Elementary School, 331 East Blakely, in Brownsville.*

### Back in the States

I am very pleased to be back at home, if only for a short time, and am enjoying every moment of it. We are finishing up the requisite paperwork a project like this demands, preparing for the submission of grant proposals, and the extension of our fund-raising efforts.

My time here has gone all to fast, but I am soaking up everything and everyone before I return to Kenya in late April for another six months.

It is difficult to tell you everything that has happened in the past three months. I but I will try to bring you up to date as much as possible.

### Catch Up News

The drought in January was severe, and a major concern for Makindu, and our families. The local agricultural non-profit organization, GTZ, predicted that 70-80 percent of the population would be experiencing famine within 2 months if things in the region didn't change, and initiated a food for work program. This aid went only to self-help groups, so our families (guardians and their own families) were first on their list some additional nutritional assistance.

The greatest accomplishment of late has been getting these kiddos off to school. I cannot tell you how lovely it felt to see their excited faces so proud and pretty darn cute in those school uniforms, I must say! I'm sure I must sound like a mom, but I do feel like one now, and I'm loving every moment of it. We have established a library of textbooks in the center, and hope to recycle them onto future classes. Almost 85% of our kids are now enrolled into primary or secondary (elementary and high school) Many of the rest are too young yet to attend. We have enrolled some of the children in the at risk home situations (who are on their own for most of the day), into nursery school. This gives them socialization opportunities, safe daycare for at least 4 hours on 5 days a week, and also allows some of the older children to attend school, as they no longer need to stay at home to care for their younger siblings.

### Madonna

Part of my job as center director is to delegate tasks, so I gave myself the wondrous assignment to prepare Madonna for boarding school, take him school shopping, and bring him to the school to get enrolled. Shopping with him was pure joy... he was grinning from ear to ear most of the day, thrilled to wear shoes, and proudly strutting about in them. (I don't think he noticed how uncomfortable a new pair of unforgiving leather shoes can be, as he was completely immersed in his moment of joy.) Once I dropped him off at the school, I was quite teary-eyed to share his excitement, and very proud of this courageous young man.

So... we have leapt into the fire here, and are making a rather large investment financially on the education scheme... but, in my mind, giving these children the chance for an education, the opportunity to dream, and to find promise and hope is what it is all about. I honestly cannot think of a better investment.

I did have a hard time saying good-bye to all of our boarding school students, but we will keep checking in on them as often as the school head masters allow us anxious parents! Although boarding school is more expensive, for some of the older children living in the most desperate and unsafe home situations, it was the only way to remove them from the temptation of the streets. Now they can focus on learning in a safe and supportive environment, without the worry of finding food for the day.

### The Kids

Kabibi is getting weaker, but still loves to go to school. She seems to know that she is very sick, but has a grace and acceptance far beyond her twelve years. I was so glad to see her lovely face on the pages of the Register Guard articles, as they captured her beauty and spirit so well. I do cherish those moments of feeling her melting in my lap, and embracing my heart.

The Ndangili family (Kajoni, Mwanzia, and little Nzilani-- also known as Wanza) are improving dramatically. Nzilani no longer screams when she sees us, is now walking/running, beginning to verbalize, and keeps us in stitches with her antics. She has become the typical two-year old terror and we love it. It is an amazing transformation from the child we first met, who had only a blank stare and frail whimper. The other day, she ate a huge meal, followed it with some

milk and a silly grin, and then promptly fell asleep in Betty's lap mid-yawn... what a picture! Now when she and her brothers see us approaching their mud-thatched hut, they run out to greet us along the path, and scream with glee as they search our pockets and backpacks for the food, milk, or surprises they know are hidden.

The Mbindyo twins have shown a remarkable improvement, and are rapidly catching up developmentally. I was surprised and thrilled to see Ngwenzes signs of congestive heart failure resolve, and her heart murmur diminish just with minimal nutritional sustenance. We found a cardiologist willing to evaluate her for free, and he advised us to continue treating her with the same medical regimen just food and love!! Mutua is running about everywhere, and is absolutely fearless, and filled with joy. Ngwenze, despite her palsy and right-sided weakness, has begun to stand with assistance, and is trying to walk. She has found her smile, at last, and it is a blessing to witness.

### **The Shamba**

WOW! We have been walking about in maize taller than myself, and the vegetable nursery is doing well. The guardians have been volunteering their time there, harvesting, weeding, and planting, and are becoming more involved and invested in their project daily; it is very heartwarming and gratifying to see. Our first harvest of maize was great fun... the guardians were shucking the maize, singing their harvesting songs, and sharing their gratitude and joy with the world. They made a real celebration of it, just as they truly know how to celebrate life, and celebrate the day.

We hope that by our next harvest in June we will be able to provide the majority of the food for the children at the center, and also have additional produce to sell at market for revenue into the program.

### **Progress**

We are now providing meals five days a week, and plan to extend feeding to a daily basis within the next two months. Currently, our goals of providing nutritional sustenance, medical care, and access into the local school system have been realized, as well as the provision of the essential emotional support and love these children so need. Fortunately, this last task is the simple one, and gives us all great joy.

While we continue to work at strengthening these basic goals, we are looking forward to our next step, which is to ensure the future sustainability of the program. Many plans are currently being developed, including initiating multiple income-generating projects within our program offerings. Ultimately, our hope is to help them to believe in their own potential and provide them a

means to become self-sufficient.

### **Volunteers**

On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, we had our first volunteer training and orientation with about 15 interested applicants. We will start sending some of them over next month. We have also been blessed thus far with two wonderful long-term volunteers. Catherine continues to assist us from Chicago with planning, and the budget and financial aspects, and Betty is soon to return to Eugene after a six months donation of her time.

### **How To Assist**

We currently cannot offer sponsorship of individual children, but instead ask that contributions to the children's needs go to one of the two categories referred to in the January newsletter basic survival assistance for those families and children with no other available source of aid, or assistance with a child's education expenses for primary or secondary schooling. The following costs show an estimate per child.

#### **Basic Survival:** (food and household supplies)

- \$25 per child per month/\$300 annual cost per child.

#### **Education Expenses:**

##### **Primary school** (*cost varies according to the grade level*):

- Day scholar: fees \$18-30 annually
- Books, supplies \$20-\$25,
- Uniform \$10
- Total estimated costs annually: \$65

##### **Boarding School:**

- fees \$110 annually
- Books, supplies \$20-\$25,
- Uniform \$20
- Total estimated costs annually: \$155

##### **Secondary School** (*tuition, fees, books, uniform & supplies*)

- Day Scholar \$175-\$215 annually
- Boarding \$315-\$385 annually

Anyone wishing to donate to one of these categories should make their check payable to Sharing Hands and note which fund you wish to support. Many thanks for your support.

*You may find all of the Eugene Register Guard articles covering the center (published in February) on the net at: [www.registerguard.com/africa](http://www.registerguard.com/africa). Also check our website at [www.makindu.org](http://www.makindu.org).*