



# Friends of Kenya Schools and Wildlife

Partnerships for Education and Wildlife Preservation

July, 2006

## Connections with a new part of the world create indelible images

Each day of **FKSW Safari #3 in January, 2006**, provided new surprises for fifteen adventurous people from Eugene, Oregon and Madison, Wisconsin. For 16 days, we traveled through Kenya, visiting our partner communities, helping with projects, viewing the wildlife and enjoying experiences that participants described as: *mind-opening, fascinating, wonder-filled, complex, heartwarming, challenging, luxurious, sense of purpose, and magical.*

In spite of hot, dusty days and unavoidable evidence of the drought which has seriously affected the country for the past two years, members of the group were forever changed by the connections with each other and with the many Kenyans they met and with whom they worked, laughed, danced and played.

In this issue of the newsletter, we'll give updates on the work in each of the communities and tell you about other ongoing FKSWS activities. But first, we'd like to share with you the words of Megan Amedo, one of the participants on our January safari.

## Reflections on Safari

*Megan Amedo wrote this letter two weeks after returning from Kenya*

My decision to go to Kenya was made in exactly the same way as every other life-changing decision in my life. There was an opportunity and the word "yes" fell out of my mouth. I always thought that decisions like these required more consideration, a meeting with a pastor, conversations with bank officials and talks with every friend, relative, co-worker I have. Turns out, it just takes a "yes". That has been lesson number one: Don't think. Just say the first thing that comes to mind because that's really how you feel.

*Lesson number two* came when I got to the airport and everything became very suddenly real. I knew leaving was a big deal, but I didn't realize how scared of change I was until I got ready to leave. I've learned that growing pains are real and they happen because we've jolted our bodies into trying something new after growing accustomed to how comfortable and safe our lives have become. Therefore, being scared is normal and NOT a good reason to limit my experiences.

*Lesson three* happened when I saw Mike in Nairobi. To describe it can't do it justice, but it was most like when I met him here in Eugene...except I was in AFRICA. I remember thinking how incredible it was that I actually got myself to Kenya. After saving a third of my check for 9 months, getting 5 huge shots, my passport and visa, a Christmas full of donations and every traveling bag under the sun, meeting strangers and succumbing to the fact that I would be living with these people for two and a half weeks...I actually made it to Africa. Mike bought us a Tusker; I sat down and realized the truth of it all. I was no longer in a country I knew...but I knew Mike and he was going to show me a place unlike anything I had ever experienced. And that felt good.

*Lesson four* solidified itself in Longicharo. The (people) had lost everything in 5 months. (*A neighboring tribe raided the village last spring, burned houses, damaged the school and took all the peoples' possessions, including their livestock. They were forced to move to a neighboring island for 6 months until it was safe to return home.*) All they have is what they were able to take with them because when they came back, their homes were destroyed; their goats were taken; their school was posts stuck in the concrete; their livelihoods had to be rebuilt. And yet, when we showed up their children held our hands and sang. The women wore their colorful scarves and the men rolled up their sleeves and dug a toilet. I met some of the most wonderful people there. Had I experienced Kenya as most tourists do – traveling by air over the villages, never stopping for a pee on the side of the road, never attempting to bridge the language gap – I would have taken two steps onto that island and thought to myself how poor these people must be. Instead I got the opportunity to know just how rich these poor people are. They don't have houses made of siding and hardwood floors, but they have homes just big enough to hold



Megan with friends in Longicharo Village Photo by Roz Slovic

their families. They don't have thousands of dollars saved in a bank for a rainy day that never comes, but they do have goats and cattle and shoes that never wear out and scarves to distinguish themselves from the tan background of the desert. They have community and culture and traditions that have lasted. Their children smile and know how to play. Who needs video games and strip malls when you have a ball to kick and a rope to jump? They know something about family that we've forgotten and they still view education as a privilege and not a right. I learned people in some of the most remote villages in Kenya don't have a lot in money but they can teach a thing or two about wealth.

*Lesson five:* I'm in love with Kenya. I could have stayed longer. I didn't want to leave and that's something I never thought would happen. Kenya started as a vacation plan. A trip I would take like so many others I've taken before. Kenya ended up taking over for two and a half weeks. The people became a part of me. I started to dream about the landscape. Even the roads...I miss the roads! But especially the people. Mike and Ben and James. Little Amos from Edonyo Sidai; Hale from Kachuru; Stephen at Waso School; the girl with the purple flowered dress at Longicharo; William from the Mara; all the dusty little kids jumping rope and kicking the soccer ball at Aitong. I realized as we left that I would miss Kenya much like I missed home while I was away. I'm still uncertain how a place can feel so comfortable after only a short time. Maybe that too will become another lesson learned.

*Finally* I've learned what's important to me. I loved Kenya. I loved getting to know everyone on the trip. I loved seeing something that doesn't resemble Eugene. I love that I've made what I see on television part of my reality. I think I would be doing a disservice to my time there if I didn't do something more with it here. (The safari) has pointed me in the direction of something I want to be passionate about. I can't get the faces of those little ones out of my head and I can't let myself forget that helping those I can help is what's most important to me. I want to keep the perspective I've gained since coming home rather than let it slide. Going to Africa changed my life... I traveled ... to a place that has changed my direction, or at least reminded me of what my direction has always been. So, thank you, thank you, thank you.

*Our best seeds and our dearest fields--those are our children.*

*Cheikh Hamidou Kane*

## 34 Children Now Receiving School Sponsorships

By Lynne Swift

Each time we visit Kenya, we're thrilled to see the results of our efforts to help the children in our rural villages attend school. With few resources but skill and dedication, teachers work hard to create stimulating learning environments that make children want to participate in school. When we bring books, pens, learning games, and art and music materials, these donations have a powerful effect on the motivation of both students and teachers.

As a result, many children want to attend school (primary school tuition is free in Kenya), but their families lack the financial resources to buy books and the required uniforms and shoes, without which they can't take advantage of these educational opportunities.

On each of our visits, with the help of a school committee in each village, we identify children who need sponsorships. These are primary school children with the greatest need whose motivation, as evidenced by their excellent marks and attendance, is very high. The parents are struggling with their school expenses. So far, we have found sponsorships for 34 children, all excellent students. There are many more who could attend school with financial assistance.

**You can sponsor a child for \$40 a year!** If you're able to help out, please mail a check to: FKSWS, 95363 Grimes Rd., Junction City, OR. 97448. Be sure to include your address and/or email and we'll send you a picture and information about your child. Your sponsorship would begin with the school year in January 2007. If you currently sponsor a child, we'll be happy to take letters and pictures if we receive them by July 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Asante Sana!**

*If you want to preserve knowledge and enable it to travel through time, entrust it to children.*



*Marily Walker with the 2 children she sponsors*

## Community Updates

### Edonyio Sidai Nursery School – Kiserian (formerly Edonyio Narok)

Accomplishments here include the completion of a new school. Constructed of local stone blocks, the school will accommodate children from nursery school to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Currently, the children walk several miles to and from school each day. This community has been seriously affected by the drought and clean water is in short supply. The women now walk long distances to collect water from several springs also used by cattle, sheep and goats. Our next project here will be to develop a new source of clean water.

### Longicharo Nursery School - Lake Baringo

Our main tasks in Longicharo Village were to repair damage from attacks by a neighboring tribe last year. Raiders burned several homes and took many of the community's livestock and personal possessions. They stole the metal roof from the school, too, but a local NGO replaced it before we arrived. We brought clothing, food for the children, dishes, blankets and treated mosquito bed nets for every family. For the school, we made a new blackboard, a desk and chair for teacher Grace Koinale, benches and desks for the children and built a toilet nearby. We presented Grace with a beautiful school bell donated by the Roosevelt Active and Caring Teens class. The bell now hangs securely on a large tree next to the school and its lovely tones ring out across Lake Baringo. The community enjoyed seeing photos of the Roosevelt students and their school in Eugene. Megan Amedo, with a translator, talked with Longicharo students to find out more about their lives and to ask them the questions that the Roosevelt teens had sent along with us.



*Friends...Edonyio Sidai*

### Kachuru Nursery School - Isiolo

Since building a nursery school in Kachuru in January 2005, the Kenyan government has added a second classroom and hired 3 teachers to serve the 140 primary aged children in the community. The government also drilled a well 5 km from the village so the community will no longer have to make the all day journey to their former water source in Magado Crater. Roz and Paul Slovic provided funds to purchase a donkey cart and humane harnesses for 2 donkeys to carry water to the children each day. We completed the community's first toilet, built 2 blackboards, brought maize, beans, rice, oil and sugar, desks and benches for the classroom, school supplies and clothing for the children. We also brought treated mosquito bed nets for 100 families.



*Sanding a new desk in Longicharo*

### Waso Nursery School –Archer's Post

Because of a large number of nomadic people who have moved into the area, the Waso community is outgrowing its school. The community requested additional space for the overflow, so we have provided funds and materials for the building of 2 additional classrooms to be constructed under the supervision of a local contractor. Archer's Post is near Kachuru, and the people here have also suffered the effects of the drought. We brought maize, beans, rice, oil and sugar, school supplies and clothing for the children. We also brought treated mosquito bed nets to all of the families.

### Olkimitare Nursery School – Aitong, Masai Mara

We are now partnering with the Kicheche Mara Camp in the Masai Mara in supporting the Aitong School. Sonia and Andy Webb, owners of the camp, have been working with the nursery for several years, and because they are in the neighborhood, it made sense to let them take the lead. We have offered to continue to bring school supplies when we come on safari and to provide student scholarships as we've done in the past. We'll also contribute funds to build a second classroom for the group of over 100 children that fill the existing classroom.

## FKSW Safari \* 4 August 6-28, 2006

The participants on our safari this summer will have the opportunity to witness the most spectacular migration on the planet--the Great Wildebeest Migration in the Masai Mara. Kenya's Masai Mara is the northern segment of the vast Serengeti ecosystem. Each year, millions of wildebeest march from the southern Serengeti in Tanzania during August and September to cross the Mara River. The experience is sure to leave us with memories for a lifetime and will be just one of the thrilling experiences we'll have. Also on the itinerary is a visit to Lamu, the ancient Arab port on Kenya's coast, and of course, visits to the villages.

### A Taste of Kenya

Once again, Marty Smith's Active and Caring Teens at Roosevelt Middle School outdid themselves. After weeks of planning and preparation, they hosted a festive evening event (May 19th) for their parents and friends to demonstrate their commitment to Longicharo Village. They are continuing to sponsor three scholarship students and presented FKSWS with a check for \$1,100! Special guest, Babacar Fall of Senegal, a visiting lecturer at the Uof O, addressed the audience applauding their efforts to support Africa.

Several of Marty's students have participated in ACT for two or three years forming a depth of caring for the children of Longicharo and understanding of their culture. Their collective decision making resulted in selecting FKSWS for their 2006-2007 school-wide fundraiser. We look forward to our continued collaboration with these inspiring teens.

**Special thanks to:** Aaron Kaufman for facilitating FKSWS's connection with ACT and for creating a stunning new 15 minute DVD focusing on Longicharo Village; Iralia Mediterranean Rustica restaurant for providing a sumptuous lamb tagine for the event.; Cattail Creek Farm for donating organic lamb; Uof O Bookstore for donating materials for a display depicting a photographic exchange between ACT and the youth of Longicharo; Megan Amedo, Lynne Swift, and Maggie Donahue for volunteering during the class' preparation.

### FKSW's New Friend

Leslie Mittelberg of Swahili Imports met with us recently to explore how to best support FKSWS villagers in using their craftwork to produce income. For over ten years she has been collaborating with talented African artisans to extract contemporary art from indigenous textiles and traditional crafts of Africa. Sharing her wealth of experience working in Kenya presented many exciting possibilities for the beaders, sculptors and weavers we meet in the villages.



If you get a chance, help us express our gratitude by visiting Swahili Imports at the Fifth Street Market boutique. If you're in Portland, stop in at their second location in The Brewery Blocks in the Pearl District. 128 NW 12th Avenue. Or shop online at [www.swahili-imports.com](http://www.swahili-imports.com).

### Photo Exchange at Longicharo *By Maggie Donahue*

Along with the highly important work of securing clean water, assessing health needs and improving environmental quality, I'm hoping to take the next step in creating a photo exchange with the young people at Longicharo. Eric and Jonathon, two boys about 12 years old, learned to use my simple digital camera in January. Their photos offered a unique perspective of the celebratory day we spent at Longicharo. Roosevelt's Active and Caring Teens responded to this set of photos by taking several of their own which I will hand carry to the children in July. This time I intend to bring several cameras and teach some photography basics such as lighting, composition, and choosing subjects to a group of about 10 children. With luck and some local community support, we will create an exhibit which can be used to raise awareness and increase the personal connection we have with the people of Longicharo.

If this project interests you please contact me at [maggiedona@comcast.net](mailto:maggiedona@comcast.net). Donations to help with the cost of cameras, batteries, ink, paper, matting and framing can be sent to FKSWS. Just write "photo exchange" in the memo. All suggestions will be appreciated.



*Eric and Jonathon shown here competing for binoculars, were Longicharo's first two photographers! January '06*



**Friends of Kenya Schools and Wildlife** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations are tax deductible. You may send contributions to the following address or for more information, contact us at:

**FKSW**

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