



Erokamano!

Spring 2020 | Friends of KMMA-CAITHS 501(c)3

www.kmma-caiths.org

kmmakenya@gmail.com

New Challenges and Old

In the face of a global pandemic, Rusinga Island communities are experiencing new difficulties that intersect and challenge the chronic need for education, sanitation, and healthcare. Again in this newsletter, we are proud to highlight positive developments at KMMA and CAITHS and to extend to our donors a hearty *Erokamano*, which means “thanks” in the Luo language. It is with your generous support – donations, prayers, and well-wishes – that **Friends of KMMA-CAITHS** is able to help Rusinga’s impoverished communities through the Kathy and Mike McNulty Academy and the health and sanitation programs at CAITHS. Your gifts are transforming the lives of children in rural Kenya during a time of extraordinary difficulty. THANK YOU for your generosity in this important endeavor, and again: Erokamano!

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KMMA-CAITHS in the Time of Covid-19

Back in February – 5 weeks before Kenya’s first COVID-19 case – CAITHS Director Samwel Owuor began researching prevention measures for the deadly disease. As a result of his foresight, and support of the CAITHS Executive Committee and KMMA teachers, CAITHS became one of the first organizations in Kenya to receive Ministry of Health training on preventing the spread of coronavirus.

Now, as Kenyans struggle to “slow the spread,” CAITHS is providing leadership across Western Kenya to help educate the public. “Our culture is built around personal relationships, from fishing to farming to giving neighbors a helping hand,” said Mr. Owuor. “Conveying the importance of these regulations and of strict sanitation guidelines is a big effort that requires constant reinforcement.” Beginning with KMMA families and continuing outreach throughout the county, CAITHS members have even been featured in radio broadcasts and newspapers, providing critical information and advocating for community-based prevention.

After the Kenyan government closed schools in March, providing for the health and nutrition of KMMA students became a critical challenge. KMMA diverted its budget for school meals to provide basic staples for all of its students and their caretakers. Likewise, faculty, staff, and volunteers continue to visit students’ homes – with masks, gloves, and appropriate distance! – to make sure the children continue to thrive.



Samwel Owuor interviewed on a local radio show broadcast discussing Covid-19

CAITHS members mobilizing prevention outreach to combat Covid-19

School is projected to start again September 1, bringing with it a new set of challenges. Regulations to reduce coronavirus spread will mean fewer students spaced among many more desks, and will require better water resources for drinking and washing. As **Friends of KMMA-CAITHS** works to help meet these requirements, we are deeply grateful for your support – especially during these difficult times in our own country.

International “Pen Pal” Student Exchange

Last spring, first- and second-graders at Grand Traverse Academy (Traverse City, MI) got a taste of school in Kenya. Slides of the KMMA classrooms, activities, and playground prompted many questions from the Michigan students: What are their homes like? Where are their brothers and sisters?

So began a “pen pal” exchange between twenty second-graders at the Grand Traverse Academy and twenty students at KMMA. Lovely pictures that only seven-year-olds can create accompanied carefully-written letters to KMMA pupils. Although late in the school year, there was just enough time for the Kenyan correspondence to return to the excited Michigan students – arriving the last day of class! Although the upcoming school year may look different from previous years, Grand Traverse Academy students hope to continue their cultural exchange as both groups of students practice their letter-writing skills on opposite sides of the world.



FRIENDS OF KMMA-CAITHS MISSION: working together to save lives and improve the prospects of the men, women, and children of Rusinga Island, Kenya, by supporting sustainable and safe solutions for education, health, nutrition, and sanitation through our partnership with the Kathy and Mike McNulty Academy (KMMA) and the community-based organization Centre for Advocacy and Interventions on Talent, Healthcare, and Sanitation (CAITHS).



Student Spotlight: Viana Wesonga

Our spotlight is on Viana Wesonga (Grade 3)! Viana helps everyone she meets, whether by doing more chores or by assisting her younger sister with schoolwork. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Viana has been teaching her family and friends to stop the spread of the virus. She leads by example, always wearing a mask and washing her hands frequently. She even adopted a hairstyle trending among Kenyan girls – reminiscent of the virus itself! – that serves as a visual reminder of the precautions we need to take against coronavirus. Thank you, Viana, for your leadership!

By the Numbers: Keeping Up!

It doesn't take much to make a difference...

- **5 Books** for the school library: **\$10**
- **School meals** for 5 children for one month: **\$15**
- **Family Water Purification System:** **\$20**
- **Resizable Shoes** that grow with the child: **\$20**
- **3 School Uniforms** (required in Kenya): **\$21**
- **A month's rent** for the school: **\$75**
- **A Teacher's salary** for a month: **\$110**
- **A year's Educational Classroom Supplies:** **\$120**
- **Community Nurse's salary** for a month: **\$300**

“The people of Rusinga have next to nothing. But what they have, they use to help each other.”

- Professor Kieran McNulty
Anthropologist, University of Minnesota



Small “Mettle” Making a Big Difference

This year’s SERVICE LEARNING students at Gotha Middle School (Windermere, FL) showed their mettle in the second annual Penny Wars fundraiser. During a two-week campaign, students raised money in pennies while competing against other classes who relied on larger denominations like silver coins, dollar bills, and paper checks. Last year’s class raised \$584 in just two weeks. Could this year’s eighth graders beat their predecessors? In fact, they raised almost that amount in one day! After 14 days, they had accumulated 159,395 pennies – over \$1500.

Students elected to donate their copper fortune to provide food and clean water systems for thirty new KMMA students’ homes. “It was incredible to see the generosity in students and their families during the fundraiser, and it was definitely a highlight of the year. This fundraiser, and learning about KMMA, is a chance for students to see the impact they can have on others, even across the globe,” said the students’ teacher Maureen Miller. Students were able to see the faces of the families they served when pictures arrived from Rusinga Island. This humble pile of pennies made a monumental difference in students’ lives on both sides of the exchange.



Connect and support education, health, and sustainable development on Rusinga Island, Kenya

A+

100% of your gift goes directly to Kenya to fund programming through CAITHS and KMMA!



Connections

kmmakenya@gmail.com

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Friends of KMMA-CAITHS

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CAITHS (Centre for Advocacy and Interventions on Talent, Healthcare, and Sanitation) is a Kenyan grassroots organization dedicated to improving lives in impoverished and disease-ravaged communities on Rusinga Island. Started in 2013 by a handful of volunteers, CAITHS began conducting small acts of charity, educational outreach, and sanitation programs where they were most needed in their villages.

In 2016, CAITHS initiated their flagship program, the **Kathy and Mike McNulty Academy** (KMMA), to provide free education, food, and health care to the orphaned and needy children in the area. With the help of the U.S. organization **Friends of KMMA-CAITHS**, the Academy and CAITHS organization are helping to break the cycle of poverty on Rusinga Island through broad-based interventions and educational programs.

