

# Erokamano!

Summer 2023

| Friends of KMMA-CAITHS 501c3

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## *Founding the Future: We're Building It!*

While many of us or our family members are in “Back to School” mode, Friends of KMMA-CAITHS is in full-on “Build a School” mode! Our building campaign *Building Hope, Learning Together* kicked off one year ago and, thanks to you (*Erokamano!*), we have already completed Phase I. Read further for more updates on the school, including photos from the new construction, and to hear about other initiatives at KMMA and CAITHS.

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## Building Campaign Update, “THANKS TO YOU!”

Just as seasons come and go, the Kathy and Mike McNulty Academy is entering a new season, and it’s an exciting one! What began as a small endeavor in ramshackle, rented space has become a much larger blessing, touching the lives and families of over 100 students. Thanks to YOU: we have been able to grow and serve more than three times the number of students than when we started. Thanks to YOU: we are starting construction on new school buildings, with larger spaces to accommodate the children of Rusinga Island. Thanks to YOU: we look to a bright future educating these children in a place we can call our own. Your generosity has created hope and life and now we are finally starting a permanent home for KMMA. The new facility will have classrooms, meeting spaces, outside areas for learning and playing, and spaces where the surrounding community can also be served. Our dedication to serving the people of Rusinga is unwavering, and we look forward to working together with you to build a school full of opportunities for the children there.

Our challenge is to continue raising the money needed for construction while also keeping KMMA up and running. Phase I of our building campaign, *Building Hope, Learning Together*, kicked off in August 2022 with the goal of \$150,000 to fund the basic classroom space. The swift and robust response from our donors, our friends, and from complete strangers has been awe-inspiring! YOU helped us cross the finish line of Phase I, and we

promptly began construction of the new school frame. But, there is still more work to be done. Phase II, here we come!

Phase II of our building campaign will transform the basic structure into a proper school. Classrooms will be wired for electricity, lighting will be added, basic furniture will be built. Phase II also includes essentials for supporting the students and faculty: a security office, latrines, water tank, bore hole well, solar power, and small computer system. Though the foundation is poured and walls are going up even now, it is Phase II that will bring to life the future home of KMMA. We look boldly towards our next goal of raising the second \$150,000 to help make those dreams come true. Again, thanks for YOU, we’re on our way!

To all of you who responded so generously to our call for aid, you have our sincere gratitude and the thanks (machiegni!) of the students, faculty, and staff of KMMA. What once seemed like an impossible task now seems attainable! We hope you enjoy these photos of the ongoing construction, and we always welcome more ideas for fundraising activities or referrals to organizations that could help realize our dream of finishing the new home for KMMA.



**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).



## Adolescent Health for Education Program—A CAITHS Initiative

Ending “Period Poverty” at KMMA-CAITHS by Kirsten Jenkins, PhD

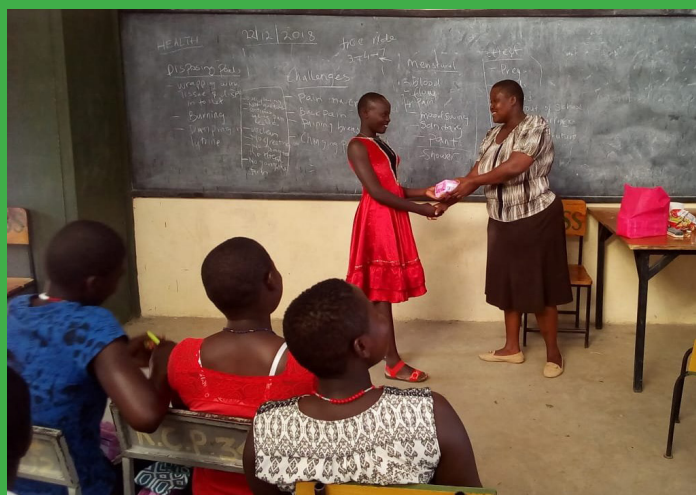


Learning to navigate your period as a teenager is hard. I remember being 16 years old and sitting next to my friend in band class. She had started her period and leaked through a bit. My friend was mortified, but I was able to give her a pad from my stash. She tied a sweatshirt around her waist and that was that. Tomorrow she would be prepared. This wasn't uncommon among my friends, and as teenagers our periods tended to visit irregularly but never kept us out of school. None of us missed 25% of our education just because of the intrinsic design of our bodies.

“Period Poverty” was once a new term to me, but it means exactly what it says: not having enough money to purchase sanitary period products. According to UNICEF, period poverty keeps over 1 million Kenyan schoolgirls out of class each year and pushes them to use unsafe practices (such as sharing used products). Unsurprisingly, period poverty systematically sets girls behind their peers, education-wise, and endangers their

health. And, government programs that help provide sanitary napkins to schoolgirls are rarely enough. Kenyan students that come from poor families often need to share with others in their household.

CAITHS recognizes that for girls to be successful in school, their periods need to be welcomed as well! This is one reason I am proud to support the Girl-Child Health initiatives at CAITHS, which provide sanitary supplies and education to older students around Rusinga Island. There should be no question that it is critically important to keep girls in school, which can help pull entire families and communities out of poverty. Providing period products also shows girls how valued they are. Even a few dollars can keep a girl in class all month, and it signals to them that they (and their periods) are not a burden and that, as the next generation of leaders in Kenya, they are worth investing in.





## Laying Strong Foundations to Build Upon



### Student Spotlight: Wilsmith Otieno

Recently graduated Wilsmith Otieno, could always be found actively engaged in his class work. At times, in the absence of his teacher, he'd take his fellow classmates through a lesson. Not only did he earn much respect from those classmates, but his abilities were recognized by the school and the community at large. His leadership skills earned him an election to school president, a position he executed wisely. We wish Wilsmith all the best in his future endeavors!

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

-Leo Buscaglia

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



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



Connections  
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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.

