



Reason2Smile Gazette

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

A Difference to that One	1-2
Student Spotlight	3
News From Kenya	3
A Passionate Librarian	4
November Events	5
Happy Holidays	5

I Made a Difference to that One



Saidi A, sponsored by Kathy Goolden.

If you've been to any of my presentations, you've probably heard me tell the starfish story but as we move into a new year, I think it bears repeating. There are many different versions of this story, here is mine:

There was a man walking along a beach at sunset. In the distance he could see someone else walking towards him. As he got closer he could see that it was a young girl, picking up starfish and throwing them into the sea. When they were within earshot, the man asked the girl, "What are you doing?"

"I'm picking up starfish and throwing them into the sea so that they can live," she answered.

The old man scoffed, "You are wasting your time.

There are thousands of starfish on this beach and this is probably happening on hundreds of beaches up and

down the coast. You can't possibly be making any sort of a difference."

The young girl looked the man in the eye as she leaned

down, picked up a starfish, and threw it into the sea.

"I made a difference to that one," she said.

This month, many people have made a difference in the life of a child at Jambo Jipya School. Kathy Goolden sponsored Fatihia and Saidi A as Christmas gifts from her two children. The Saint-Louis family sponsored Alphonse this Christmas season. Tricia Balk is giving Hussein a reason to smile in 2011. Paula Hameline and her family are giving James a second chance at life off the streets. Amy Quinn sponsored a nine-year-old boy named Kevin, the same age as her son Kevin. Sue Sweeney is providing Mwanahamisi M with comfort and safety. Michael Tuggey is giving little Rama a place to play and learn during the day. Steven Larison, Linda Pickering, Stacie Wiggins, and many others continued to support the children they have been sponsoring for the past few years. These people, and so many more, have



Mwanahamisi M, sponsored by Sue Sweeney.

Continued from page 1



Rama, sponsored by Mike Tuggey.

made a truly remarkable difference in the life of a child.

I'll be the first to admit that it is overwhelming at times. Similar to the starfish washed up on the beach, there are hundreds of thousands of children (people) who need our help. It's easy to say that the problem is too large and convince yourself that you can't possibly make any sort of a difference. But the fact is that you *can*. One child at a time, you *can* make a difference. And honestly, I think that's the *only* way we are going to make any sort of an impact. By providing a child with a safe place to learn and grow, you are giving them the opportunity to send ripples out into the world and they will positively impact others in a way you can't possibly imagine. One child at a time, you *can* change the world.

My goal is to have 150 children sponsored by January 1, 2011. We currently have 75 students fully sponsored for 2011 and another 26 pledged sponsorships. Right now, 101 children will be provided with food, clothing, healthcare, and an education due to the generosity of 100 people on this side of the globe! That is such a blessing! With one month left, I truly believe we will reach the goal of 150 children; but I need your help.

If you are willing to donate **\$15 per month** in order to make a true difference in the life of a child, please contact me at keela@reason2smile.org. I will match you up with a child who needs your help and will send you the child's picture and biography so that everyday during the 2011 year, you can remember which starfish you picked up and threw back into the sea.



Ritah, sponsored for another year by Stacie Wiggins.

Thank you for your willingness to impact the world by helping a child. Blessings to you and yours this holiday season!

Smiles,
Keela

Student Spotlight

When thinking of a child to sponsor, donors are often drawn to young, cute children. Unfortunately that means that often the teenage students are overlooked. Teenage years are critical for children everywhere, but they are especially important in a country like Kenya where sex and drugs run rampant. Giving a teenage boy or girl an opportunity to get off the streets and into a school everyday literally means the difference between pregnancy, drugs, and crime; and a healthy young adult who has hope for the future and the potential to give back to their community. Kanze is one of these teens. With virtually no family support and sexual activity as the only option for an income, Kanze was taken in by Jambo Jipya The Future Child Orphanage in 2007. This previously quiet and shy girl is now 16 years old and attending Class 7 at Jambo Jipya School. She works very hard on her studies and often scores within the top three in her class. Kanze can often be found helping with the cooking, cleaning, or keeping track of the younger children. She is a wonderful young lady whose sense of self has really started to soar since she began living at the school. You can truly give Kanze a future and a reason to continue smiling by sponsoring her today!



News From Kenya

The school year wrapped up for the students at Jambo Jipya on November 25th. They now have their “summer” break with only the 43 students who call the school home, spending their time there. The year ended with the 8th grade countrywide exams and although the results won’t be available until February of 2011, the students felt very good about their performance and are relieved to be finished with all the testing. With everyone aging one year (everyone’s birthday is celebrated in January since many of the children don’t know their birth dates) and, hopefully, advancing a grade level, school will begin again on January 3rd. In the meantime, the holiday season will be fully celebrated with special feasts and fellowship, and hopefully Mother Nature will decide to bless the country with much needed rain. Christine and the children send messages of thanks and holiday cheer to all who continue to support and pray for them!



The Jambo Jipya family all dressed up on Christmas Day 2009.

A Passionate Librarian



Donna Rosenblum and her family on vacation.

Donna Rosenblum is a blessing in every sense of the word. With incredible enthusiasm and compassion, she has fully wrapped her arms around this project. I (Keela) received an email from Donna about a year ago saying she'd read an article in the NY Education publication regarding a middle school in Central NY that had raised funds for a school and orphanage in Mtwapa, Kenya. A school called Jambo Jipya. Her email was gung-ho and I honestly thought to myself, *Who is this lady and why does she have so much enthusiasm when she's never met me and never visited the school? This must be too good to be true.* Luckily, I was quite mistaken. After a couple email

exchanges, Donna had made up her mind that she would raise the funds needed to build a library for Jambo Jipya School even if it took her the next 5 years to do so. With a goal of \$10,000 and a desire to change the way a child looks at the world merely by placing a book in their hand, Donna plowed full speed ahead.

I recently had the true pleasure of visiting Donna and her family in Merrick, NY (on Long Island). I was greeted by a woman who I instantly felt like I had known forever, and two dogs who couldn't get enough of this new lady who had walked through their door. It was truly two of the most enjoyable days I've had since I began this project. As I was shown pictures and told stories about Donna and her husband's honeymoon in Kenya back in the 80s, laughter echoed throughout the house. I was brought back to my own childhood and filled with the warmth that only a true family can bring as I gathered around the dinner table with a girl in 12th grade who loves sports and generously gave up her room for the night for me; a boy in 9th grade who has a passion for music, acting, and a desire to travel to Africa one day; a 6th grade adorable blonde boy whose infectious attitude left me with a smile spread wide across my face; and a father whose handy work in the kitchen gave me hope for a husband who would share the household duties with me one day. It all just felt incredibly right.

So after an evening of speaking with students at a local Jewish Temple School and a day of speaking with middle and high school students at Donna's school in Floral Park, I easily made the 6 hour drive back north with a light and happy heart. Since that trip, Donna has contacted the School Library Journal and they printed an article in their national publication (link below), and after just two days time, connections are already forming thanks to a middle-aged woman from Long Island who has a passion for children and books. We can all make a difference....

http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/slj/newslettersnewsletterbucketextrahelping2/888288-477/librarian_helps_give_kenyan_kids.html.csp

November Events

November was a busy month with many events and activities. The Homegrown Concert at Wells College was a joyful event with many talented groups performing. Performances included the college's two acapella groups, multiple dance groups ranging from Hawaiian and modern to clogging to a fiddler and an energetic step group, as well as multiple bands (student and faculty). The evening was a lot of fun and we all look forward to next year! Thank you to all the performers, Susan Talbot, and all others who were involved in making the evening a success! The month also included numerous school and church presentations:

Skaneateles Middle School, Floral Park Middle/High School, Driver Middle School, Robert C. Parker Middle School, Turnpike Wesleyan Church, St. Peter's Church women's group in Plattsburgh, Hart Global Awareness Conference at SUNY Oswego, and Lake Placid Rotary Club. Thanks to all who attended these presentations and to those who helped make them possible! Finally, this month rounded out with a number of craft sales across NY State. From Saranac Lake to Red Creek, thank you to everyone who attended and supported Reason2Smile by purchasing a good or sponsoring a child; and a special thank you to Gail Meyer, Debbie Neill, and Kitty Dates for helping run the tables at those events!



Dropship – a student band that performed at the Homegrown Concert at Wells College.

Happy Holidays!



May you all bask in the joy and blessing that this season brings! Enjoy your time with loved ones as we bring one year to an end and begin another! "See" you in 2011!