



What do we do when we're in Africa? Good question, one we're often asked. Below is the answer, & hang onto your hat. We keep very busy & this report reads more like a book. If you tire of reading, perhaps you can just enjoy the photos.

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We arrived safe & sound Friday afternoon 10/28 at a Nairobi airport surrounded by verdant Spring growth. 'Met by faithful friend Sam, who somehow packed 11 suitcases & 3 hefty Americans into his van. Away we went to [Nyumbani](#) orphanage, our home away from home here in Kenya, arriving just in time to see dedication of a new playground built by U.K. volunteers. I was surprised but encouraged to see a young woman in a wheelchair--evidence of my claim that travel & work here aren't as difficult as you might fear.

The photo above is from the window of our room. Beautiful purple blossoms are on a jacaranda tree, one of many nearby. This meditative scene was marred only by monkeys screeching out their boundaries, sounds of peepers looking for girlfriends, & calls of various exotic birds which shall remain nameless because I am an incompetent birdwatcher.

As always, we hit the ground running to prepare for the work of the coming

weeks. Africa phones, a few groceries, messages to dear friends, & checking plans. We met with Sister Julie, busily preparing for the Halloween party with the 70+ children at Nyumbani. She was mighty happy to receive the many treats & decorations provided by friend Kay Lewellyn who accompanied us this trip.



Entrance to Nyumbani, founded 30 years ago solely for HIV+ children



Sister Matron introducing a child to the new playground



Think they're having fun?!



If she can do it, anyone can!



Sister Julie keeping kids in line



Happy Batgirl

Sunday morning brought us to the chapel & Mass. We posted memory cards of loved ones in the U.S. who have passed away. People draw comfort knowing that friends across the ocean are holding their families in prayer: the fellowship of grief.



R: Fr. Francis asking the children to pray for the departed & their families.



Monday morning we headed for Global 1 school in Kibera, visiting classes & distributing treats supplied by Kay. Not many masks here. Covid isn't an issue & they've stopped counting cases because there are few--a miracle considering extreme crowds & lack of sanitation in the slums. Yet, economic hardship is extreme.



[St. Aloysius Gonzaga secondary school](#), also in Kibera, is a "must see." Boys & girls from one of the largest & most dismal slums in the world receive an excellent education complete with the Jesuit value of service to others. School is held Saturdays because the kids are given a meal & for many it's the only food they get all weekend. We bring donated jackets, t-shirts, & underwear. (Lots of giggling as the girls chose bras & underpants.)



These kids look smart in their uniforms, yes? Behind the scenes: it's the only decent outfit owned by many. They wear



uniforms to church on Sunday amidst much teasing. So...before we leave Kenya we drop off any clothes we can spare.

One young boy was too small for any of the jackets. I promised to get him something. I looked in my suitcase & by chance I'd brought a boy's outfit, so off it went to him. Next day I got this photo of Maxwell, clearly over the moon with his new treasures. Good fit!



Tuesday: On the way to Upendo Village to deliver goats & chickens we stopped at the clinic of our graduate Dr. Sam Mwangi. He's doing great & now employs 3 staff members, one of whom is another of our grads, Angelah Achieng . A few months ago she checked in with us & reported difficulty finding a job in Nairobi. I contacted Dr. Sam, who was pleased to hire her--a great example of the networking benefit of Project Harambee. And we were delighted to deliver a donated microscope to the clinic.

One of the really fun parts of our work is naming & giving out donated goats & chickens, appreciated even more right now because of the severe drought rendering small farms (shambas) less productive & profitable.

[Watch the video of us giving out your goats!](#)



As I helped give out chickens, some were very noisy & excited & not easy to control. I remembered something my mother told me years ago about her experience on a farm. She worked with chickens & said *if you bend a chicken's neck over gently & place its head under a wing & rock it, the chicken will fall asleep.* 'Ever heard of this? 'Easy & it works! All were fascinated to see it; we laughed & laughed together (an international language).



You'll remember that goat donors get a handmade gift card & also get to name their goat. We bring your photo for the goat's new family & bring their picture back to you. This is a wonderful gift for "someone who has everything," especially for children--building bridges that connect families across an ocean, across languages & cultures. There's no more powerful lesson about sharing & social justice. Kids love choosing a name.



We watched distribution of grains & dried beans by Sister Florence. People literally are starving due to drought. 'Hard to hold back tears as I saw men & women bending over to pluck up every last grain that had fallen on the ground. That's how valuable each one is.

Each goat recipient signs a contract showing they have learned proper care of the goat & will donate a goat back to the project. This is a sustainable program that's provided nearly a thousand of these precious animals to families, has made for good neighbors & stronger communities.



Esther, an Upendo Village success story. Her hard work, with a "hand up" from Project Harambee & Upendo Village, resulted in her 3 children completing college & a plot of land she was able to purchase.

Next stop: School for the blind in Thika, where the standard is **DISABILITY IS NOT INABILITY.**

When I exited the car & approached the entrance, Teacher John emerged & exclaimed "Katherine!" (Teacher John is blind.) "How did you know it was me?" I asked.

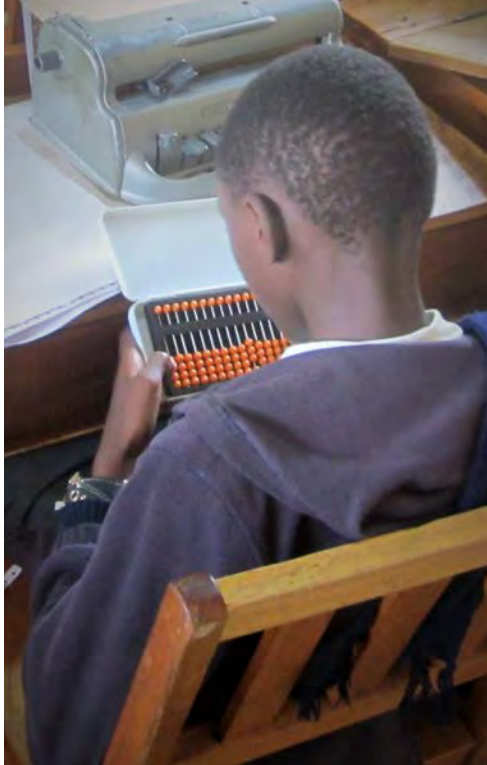
He replied with a smile "I smelled you." Well, that's perplexing!

It's amazing how children are prepared for a productive future, doing math on abacuses faster than I could on a calculator.

To encourage musical talent we've brought donated musical instruments in past years, including an electronic keyboard from my grandson. This time Kay brought many recorders to add to the collection. When I brought out a small xylophone & struck a note the room erupted in cheers. Apparently they'd been longing for one. For this gift I paid \$5 at Goodwill; their response was priceless.

Heartwarming news: The musical group won several regional music competitions, went all the way to national, won & came home with a huge gold trophy for **FIRST PRIZE.**

(Note the albino boy below. They often have very poor eyesight & must flee from neighboring countries where they're considered outcasts & are persecuted.)



Needed: More Braille books & writers. Care to donate for this?



Off to Hekima Place, a "must" for Kay. Begun by American Kate Fletcher, it's a safe & loving home in Kiserian for orphaned & vulnerable girls, now managed by Mum Margaret.

Kate Fletcher's work has expanded to include schools for more than 1,000 girls, Hekima Hills. I first met Kate in 2004; she's a powerful example of what can be accomplished by a woman on a mission. (Though she credits "Gracie," her name for the Holy Spirit.)

Kay is in her element with little ones, and it shows.



We want to make the most of our limited time in Kenya so we head right off to southeastern Kenya to see Nyumbani Village an eco-designed farm & home to 100 grandmothers who are raising their orphaned grandchildren. They have trade schools in sewing, cosmetology, woodworking, welding, & other skills so that their high school grads will be able to earn a living. It's another place where we've donated lots of goats & beehives. They have solar panels everywhere, including one that powers a weather station transmitting rainfall & other data to the county government. Sad news: the drought has been severe. There's no honey from their many hives, hung in the trees for protection. But good news: There are many *kiondos* woven by the *shushus* (grandmothers). We will be offering them for sale back home. Perfect for plants, utensils, knitting supplies, & best as Easter baskets.



Note the wine holder kiondos. Add a favorite cab or chardonnay for a unique holiday gift.

Speaking of crafts & gifts, we had a joyous reunion with friends of many years, led by organizer Waithira Gitu. They had new members in the group & unique new items to show us, all available to you. If you're around Chicago, contact me or come to the St. Giles holiday fair December 2 & 3, in Oak Park.