

Rafiki Update April 2016

Overview

It didn't seem quite right to be at Rafiki without John Nganga, the founder and CEO of Rafiki whose original vision and constant "pressing on" for 18 years has been the underpinning of the entire project. However, we are so grateful that his health is holding up with the help of a skillful medical team, a dedicated wife and family, and the Grace of God. God willing, John is currently planning a return to Rafiki this summer. For this trip, John's cousin Eston Kihara had been here for several days when I arrived, and represented John for the many events we had packed into a few days. Eston has just become a member of the US Rafiki Board.

Every time I visit the Rafiki Campus, I am more and more impressed with how well the team in Kenya has been able to not only keep the ship afloat, but to continue moving forward and making progress in many unexpected ways. Rafiki Academy began in January 2012 with 35 students in three classrooms. Less than four years later we have 12 teachers and 240 students in classes pre-school through Class 8. Under the guidance of our **Headmaster Barnard**, all of our students from Class 8 passed their national examinations and have gone on to High School.



Main campus of Rafiki Academy



3 new classrooms on the 2nd floor of the clinic

Rafiki Academy growth and excellence in education

The expansion has been made possible by a coalition of incredible donors from the Short North and downtown Rotary Clubs, First Community Church in Columbus, generous individual donors, and on-going faithful support from friends in Florida. Not only does Rafiki Academy provide excellent general education with small classes and dedicated teachers, but the Art Department, through the Oh-Kyung Taylor Art School, and the Music Department funded by the Short North Rotary Club in Columbus provide enhancements to the educational experience of our students available nowhere else in the region. Of course, all Rafiki beneficiary kids attend the school, but they are only 1/3 of the students. The other 2/3 come from the town, so we are benefitting children from the entire community. The Art School is producing amazing arts and crafts, which are being transported to Columbus for sale, the

proceeds of which will continue to fund the Art Department going forward. The Rafiki Choir went all the way to the national finals this past fall in Kenya to place 4th of 41 in their very first year of competition. And the Academy has begun to compete regionally in athletics (football – or soccer as we call it), once again winning the competition on their first try. Rafiki Academy's tag line is "The Home of the Eagles" and they are flying high.



The Art School is an integral part of classes



All students benefit from learning about music



Art students show their drawings



Rafiki singers performing at our celebration

All of this couldn't happen without the ongoing support of the rest of the organization which I call "Team Rafiki". The farm, which is managed by Ben, supplies food, not just for the orphanage, but for a snack and lunch for the entire Academy. And the day to day management of the orphanage itself, under Amos's leadership, is supplying our most important product- the feeling of family, belonging, self-worth, and accomplishment that our kids need, since they don't have that as a result of being part of what we would call a "normal" family.



Amos (left) and Ben (right): key team members



The farm feeds the orphanage and the Academy

Quilts for the kids

For over a decade the Quilt Ministry at First Community Church, “Prayers and Squares” has made quilts for the Rafiki kids. These quilts are enormously popular. From the earliest years, beginning when Rafiki occupied a rental house in Kikuyu town, each kid has been given their own quilt, with their name on it, which they could put on their own bed. The quilts are made by a dedicated group of quilters who gather every Thursday at First Community Church to make prayer quilts for those who request prayers as well as for Rafiki kids. Each year the quilts are delivered to new kids and wrapped around them at a special ceremony. Seeing the expressions on their faces as they get their very own special quilt made just for them is worth the whole trip.



Quilting ceremony on Sunday Morning – Eston, Terry, and Rev. Geoffrey Kinyanjui “quilt” a Rafiki kid



Quilts on the kids’ beds in the dorm

Next steps

With the current buildings at Rafiki Academy, we could accommodate another 90 students if we had a second bus to pick up the kids, and additional equipment and supplies for the classrooms. This would be a considerable financial advantage, which could, ultimately support the rest of the organization. The team from the Short North Rotary Club in Columbus is spearheading a matching “Global Grant” from the Rotary Club District and Rotary International, including the downtown Rotary Club and others, to fund a new expansion of Rafiki Academy, including a new bus. Donations from First Community Church, our partner from the beginning, and from other generous individual donors will continue to support this incredibly effective organization on its way to becoming self-sustaining.

Terry Davis

April, 2016