

## **Rafiki Update March 2017**

### **Travelers**

This year I took a small group with me to witness what is happening at Rafiki. The group consisted of fellow Rotarian Steve Heiser from the Columbus Club and his wife, Karen, who is a colleague of mine at Nationwide Children's Hospital over all Education programs including our residents and fellows. Also along were Ted and Bobbie Celeste, pillars of First Community Church that has been a huge supporter of Rafiki. Rounding out the group was a friend of mine, Arnett Howard – a very popular jazz musician in the central Ohio area. We were delighted that John Nganga was able to join us from Florida.

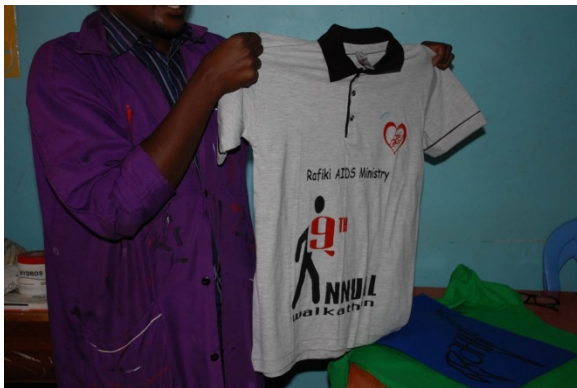


**L -> R: Ted, Terry, Arnett, Karen, Steve, Bobbie**



**Kids were everywhere to greet us**

On Friday, we initially toured the campus and got to drop in on classes in the Academy. We saw our great teaching staff in action, and the students were their usual polite selves. While the classes were fairly full, we could see that the coming expansion of students will be able to be accommodated. In the Oh-Kyung Taylor School of Art we could see they had been busy making shirts to be sold at the Walkathon coming up the next day. Their sales would be over \$450, for a net profit of \$200 for the Art School. Had they known they would sell so well, they would have made more!



**Walkathon Shirts made in the Art School**



**Amazing Choir in the Music School**

Other drawings, glass art and string art were also in evidence. In the Music School the Choir performed for us. They will be going to national competition again this year. Last year they came in as high as fourth in the nation during their trip sponsored in part by First Community Church. Not on campus were the 18 kids in high school and five in University. Many of their school fees were sponsored by the Mission Council at First Community Church.

Also included in the very-busy-Friday was tree planting (we each got a tree to plant) and a visit to the home of one of our students, Kevin – a rare opportunity to go into a home in this area of extreme poverty. We met his grandfather, Paul Zakayo: a delightful and very grateful gentleman whose home of corrugated steel could barely hold his bed, one chair, his living essentials, bike, and a little stove. Even in the daylight, it was so dark we needed to use our smartphones as flashlights to provide light. Despite coming from that background, Rafiki Academy is providing Kevin, as well as his sister and a cousin, with a first class education, diet, as well as medical, dental, emotional and spiritual care.



**Karen Heiser plants a tree**



**Paul Zakayo in his home**

Saturday Morning was all about the Walkathon and catching up with our colleagues in the Rotary Club of Kikuyu. This club is our local partner for a Global Grant being submitted to Rotary International by District Governor Nominee Designate Gary Vaughn of the Short North Rotary Club. This Global Grant would fund a significant expansion of Rafiki Academy. More about that later. The Kikuyu Club is definitely invested in Rafiki. They sponsored and organized the Walkathon fundraiser – a three mile walk followed by a “Harambe” – whereby local people put in small amounts of money into a large hat. And this exercise actually generated \$3600 from the local community! That says a great deal. And, by the way, Paul (Kevin’s granddad) showed up to support the Walkathon!



**Pres. John, Terry, Treasurer Ann, Moses, Steve**



**The Kikuyu Club is “all-in” and totally committed**





**The Walkathon mid-way to Rafiki**



**The Harambe at the end of the Walkathon**



**Bobbie continues Quilting tradition**



**“Arnett’s Army” gets into the trumpet**

An old tradition is giving each orphan their own quilt, lovingly made for them by the “Prayers and Squares” quilting group of First Community Church. Barb Davis usually does this when she comes, but this year Bobbie Celeste did a great job of “robing” the kids. Arnett began a brand new tradition as he sat under a tree by himself and began blowing his horn. One by one kids gathered round until he was totally surrounded – he let them try to make a sound and some actually could. Future musicians!!



**New Cow Shed and cows**



**Pastor Kimani presides over generator dedication**

Two other new items have arrived on campus through the generosity of the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas, and a matching grant from John Nganga's Rotary Club of Ft. Lauderdale North Beach: a new cow shed with five new cows, and a brand new generator – this one large enough to supply the whole campus when the rather unreliable electricity from town goes down. Both of these wonderful additions were dedicated over the weekend by Pastor Victor Kimani, mission pastor of Parklands Baptist Church that was instrumental in securing these donations.

### **Next steps**

Our focus for the next couple of months is expansion of Rafiki Academy, and this is a multi-pronged effort. The strategy is clear. We have a very solid Academy, with a computer lab and attached Schools of Music and Art. Over the years, 25 Rotary Clubs from District 6690, have contributed to Rafiki. With the current number of students, the school fees from the 2/3 of our students who are from the town just about support the expenses for the school. The current infrastructure of the school could support an additional 90-100 students with only a small increase in operating expenses, and this would have a significantly positive effect on the school and its finances. The rate limiting step at the moment is insufficient transportation to pick up and return more students from town. Our current bus, significantly financed by John and Cheryl Zeiger and First Community Church, is a great asset, but being used to the max. The previously mentioned Global Grant submission would provide an additional bus as well as other essentials to upgrade and expand various aspects of the Academy. Other planned grant applications would upgrade the teachers' staff room and provide personal items that the new students would need for themselves, but which they would be unlikely to afford: school uniforms, shoes, books, etc. Hopefully, when we return next year, we will be looking at an expanded student body and be yet another step closer to being self-sustaining.

In closing, I want to recognize every individual and every group that has contributed to Rafiki since 2004. You are too numerous to mention in this brief update, but what we witnessed during the trip this year was all built on the foundation of previous and ongoing commitments. Your names are immortalized in the scores of plaques around the campus, but, more importantly in the eyes and ears and voices of the kids at Rafiki- that have a life now and a future they would not have had without your involvement. Thanks to all of you from the entire Rafiki family and me.

Terry Davis

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