

Mission...what we do

Provide education and support for Nairobi children living in poverty whose families are affected by HIV/AIDS so they can transform their lives. Friends of Ngong Road pairs each sponsor with a specific child allowing a mutually beneficial relationship to develop.

Friends of NGONG ROAD Newsletter

Bringing the Voices of Ngong Road to You

Peter Ndungu, Executive Director of Ngong Road Children Association, recently spent four weeks in the United States. He met with donors across four states and through a multi-media presentation, brought the voices and faces of the children of our program from Nairobi to America.

Voices of Ngong Road

One of our interns, Lukas Olynyk, spent last summer with the program in Nairobi. His main task was to take new pictures of the children (which have been sent to sponsors electronically) and made short videos of them during their school day and at home. These videos were used to "bring the children" to America.

Peter's Story

Many already know Peter's story. He was orphaned when he was 11 years old and left to fend for himself. He lived in the shack in the extremely impoverished "village" of Kibera in Nairobi. He fed himself through odd jobs and by attending a lunch program at a Lutheran church located near Kibera. Through perseverance and with the aid of a Lutheran pastor he found a sponsor to help him with school fees. This experience drove him to become a Lutheran pastor and to help other children like him. His passion and vision led to the formation of Friends of Ngong Road.



Peter with some sponsors and new friends in Decorah, IA



Peter's birthday in Minneapolis



Peter with the Johnson Family

Meeting Sponsors and Donors

One of our goals for Peter's visit was to have him meet as many sponsors and donors as possible. Although he didn't meet you all, he spoke at more than 30 gatherings to well over 500 people at sponsor events, dinner

parties, Rotary clubs and churches. Peter's visit energized our fundraising and resulted in 10 new sponsors joining the organization. If you didn't get a chance to meet Peter, we hope you'll be able to the next time he comes to visit the USA.

Thank you for giving to the MAX at the holidays!



Many people responded to our holiday donation campaign with generous gifts. In fact, on November 17, we received contributions totaling more than \$17,000 during "Give to the MAX" day for Minnesota charities! GiveMN.org pledged a \$500,000 match for monies donated that day and also covered all credit card transaction fees. Our match was more than \$700. It's not too late to give for 2009! **GiveMN.org is still accepting gifts to Friends of Ngong Road, and they'll still cover all credit card fees. Click on the link at left to donate now.**

Click on the link above, or go to GiveMN.org and search for "Ngong Road"

Notes from Paula

The first day of each new year is special to me, not only because a new year begins but also because January 1 is the birthday of Friends of Ngong Road. On January 1, 2006 I first met Peter and on January 1, 2007 I arrived in Kenya to launch the organization. On January 1, 2010 I will be in Kenya again and we will be celebrating the successful completion of our third full year of operations.

We are now supporting 260 children in Nairobi by providing food and education, community and a chance to live a full life. We employ six people full time and four people part time; our cause in Kenya creates work for cooks, women sewing and knitting uniforms, HIV+ women who sell us baskets and many more. We held our third camp in 2009, creating an environment conducive to relationship building for our children and the adults who support them.



Paula with Emily

In 2009 we improved the program in important ways:

- We held our first medical camp, treating more than 200 children and testing most of our children for HIV; we also now collect height/weight information on all our children at least annually.
- We relaunched our lending library with real success. Every week children come to the office on Saturday to check out books.
- We added breakfast for the children and provided family food support to those in greatest need.
- We reorganized and upgraded our staff, allowing for teams of case workers to manage 50 – 60 children.
- We hosted two interns in Kenya and got the benefit of eight weeks of their work.
- We brought Peter to the U.S. to meet sponsors.

We learned some tough lessons too. Our operations are heavily dependent upon electricity and internet access, as our operating platform is a web-based database. Kenya's electricity is primarily hydro (a problem during droughts) and Nairobi rationed electricity for much of the year. Late in the year we received the gift of a generator so we now have a backup. We moved offices in 2009 and lost a great deal of momentum as we struggled to restart internet service. And we worked hard in Kenya to disassociate our program from a failing school and move children to a healthier learning environment.

We look forward to 2010 with optimism and deep gratitude to each and every person involved with making Friends of Ngong Road a program that is changing young lives. Thank you!

Paula Meyer,
President, Friends of Ngong Road

Sisters Sponsor Sisters

Joyce Weiner first heard about Friends of Ngong Road in 2007 when she visited Paula Meyer at her home in Iowa and it stayed in the back of her mind.

In 2009, Joyce was discussing Friends of Ngong Road with her sister **Ellen Kantrowitz** in Boston and they both decided to sponsor a child. Joyce and Ellen talked about whether they should request sisters but, since Joyce had already decided on the child she wanted to sponsor, they started their sponsorships independently.

After a couple months, Joyce and Ellen both got letters from their sponsored children – **Dessy Akinyi** (on left) and **Fenny Achieng** (on right). They compared notes and began to wonder whether Fenny and Dessy were siblings. So Joyce sent us an email asking the question. It turns out that Dessy is 13 and Fenny is 10 years old and they are, in fact, sisters. They live with their 18-year-old sister and father who is HIV+ and quite ill.

We have many examples of families where more than one child is in the program. But Joyce and Ellen (at right) are the only U.S. sisters we know who are sponsoring sisters in Kenya!



Breakfast

"It's the most important meal of the day!"

It is finally raining in Kenya but the drought of 2009 resulted in significant hunger in both rural and urban areas. Early in 2009 we learned that the only meal being eaten by our children many days was the lunch we served them. In April we added breakfast for all children not in boarding school, served during the school week. Breakfast is usually a cooked cereal and a bread product. Although the impact is difficult to measure, we feel our children have done better in school because they've had food in their stomachs.



Breakfast is served!

Our Sponsors and Supporters are very creative fundraisers!



Eliza Gabriel (above) has been the primary letter-writer to one of the children her family sponsors for the past three years. She has heard about life in Nairobi and wanted to do something to help. So Eliza contacted numerous family friends and asked them to gather books they no longer wanted. Her plan was to sell the books to a used book store and donate the proceeds to Friends of Ngong Road. When she picked up the books she also asked if they would be willing to add a cash contribution for the cause. Both parts of her strategy proved very successful. Way to go Eliza!

Maura Roby makes cards. They are beautiful, painstakingly decorated greeting cards for all occasions – thank you, birthday, get well, sympathy. Maura decided to have a sale of her cards with the proceeds going to Friends of Ngong Road. She invited friends and family, encouraging a donation rather than charging a price. Thank you, Maura!

Sponsor **Leslie Steubs** approached Creek Valley Elementary School in Edina (where her now college and high school aged children attended) about collecting used books that could be added to our Ngong Road lending library. A few weeks later, students and faculty had donated nearly 300 books along with dozens of bookmarks made by Creek Valley students and a cash donation to buy supplies for the library.

Shortly after, two partners in the downtown Minneapolis law firm of Lommen Abdo who have supported our annual fund raisers heard about Leslie's efforts. **Stacey DeKalab** (pictured, upper right) and Margie Bodas commenced a book drive at their law firm



resulting in donations of dozens more books. These two efforts have doubled the size of our library!

As a side note to show how much the library is appreciated by our Nairobi children, Executive Director Peter Ndungu reported that the day after school let out for the December break, the library was flooded with students. In fact, it was so crowded that they had to send many home and assign times for them to come back to read and check out books!

Thank you! Your creativity is making a difference.

Letter From Nairobi

By Peter Ndungu
Executive Director

Dear Friends,

This has been a big year here in Ngong Road. Much has been achieved and yet there is more to do.

Medical Camp in March was very successful

It was our first medical camp and things went smoothly. We had volunteers from the US who worked with the team from Kenya. It was during the camp that we were able to know the health status of our children. The medical camp has been of great benefit to the children since they got the chance to be treated for various illnesses and also they were tested for HIV and Aids. They also get a chance to learn more about healthy eating, improving on hygiene and the importance of taking medication if tested positive.



The New Library has been a great help to children

Children make appointments on Saturday to come to the library to read. It is so crowded they cannot come at once. In addition, they borrow books and go home with them and they return them after the days agreed with the administrator. The new library is well equipped with books and neatly arranged.

Since we started up the library program many of the children have become very interested in reading story books and novels. This is helping them improving their English grammar and even writing letters. Now that the children are on December Holiday many of them are coming to borrow books that will keep them busy reading at home.

New breakfast program is much appreciated

Most of the children used to go to school without breakfast and this made them unable to concentrate on their class work during the morning hours. Most of the parents are not able to afford much food. Now with the new breakfast program and our lunch program every kid is sure to at least get two meals a day.

Focus School evaluations led to big change

Every year we have an evaluation of our focus schools. At the beginning of this year we noted that one of the schools was not delivering on its goals and objectives. The head teacher also became uncooperative. Therefore we moved 76 children from that school (City Prime) to Nelson Mandela Academy. They started to improve their performance immediately. The teachers are well-trained and know their work. Both the children and the parents like the school.

My visit to the USA was of great help

I was able to meet with many sponsors and donors and express my thanks for their support. During my visit it became clear how the database is used by our partners in the U.S. and I saw how happy the sponsors are to receive letters from the children. I came back to Kenya with a lot of changes on how to manage the work in Kenya after the life changing experience of my trip. Thanks to all those who hosted me and made my stay what it was.

Drought in Kenya is improving

Due to lack of rain fall in Kenya we had electricity rationing in the country and this interrupted our working system very much. Hence a new generator was purchased with help of a donation. This will help our work to continue running smoothly since we highly depend on hydroelectric power in Nairobi. Many suffered because of the drought; food was a problem and even water. Many died because of hunger and some migrated to other places in search of food and water. Prices of food were so high that most people were not able to afford it.

We have now experienced some rainfalls and crops are starting to grow. We hope that by mid next year things will be back to normal. Food has become available and many places have access to water again.

Thank you,

Peter Ndungu

Executive Director, Ngong Road Children Association