



The Giraffe Project Autumn 2016 Newsletter

www.giraffeproject.org



Our fantastic team of students!



Brand new classrooms at GEC. They have been built so we can add an extra storey as soon as we raise the funds!



Risper graduated as a nurse last September and currently works in an NGO orphanage and hospital in Mombasa. She is now able to improve her mother's life and support her 2 brothers through secondary education – 'Giraffe' success indeed



Congratulations to Prudence who started her own nursing training last week at the Kenya Medical Training College

Welcome to our Autumn newsletter! Report from our Summer Trip

This year we took a group of teenagers with us from various Belgium international schools. They really added to the whole trip; helping willingly with all aspects of the work, spending time with the primary and secondary students as well as adding to the fun, noise and chaos which accompanies all our Kenyan visits. Their perceptions and opinions of what they saw made us 'old timers' see slum life again through their eyes and helped us not to take for granted the disparity between our two very different worlds.

Gavin talks about the trip in more detail below but just to say that I had two very good days meeting the current college students and also chatting to the 2015 secondary graduates. We have 22 secondary graduates, all who want to continue their education, however the end of secondary schooling is a good time to reassess students on their motivation, financial need and realistic expectations about their chosen course. This assessment meant that not all students were successful in their college application. Nevertheless, we have 9 students who have just started degree or college courses in September and 7 more waiting to begin in January once their course choices have been finalised and support for them found. Congratulations to Michael, our top student this year, who has just started his degree course in engineering at Masinde Muliro university. We also have 2 more student nurses, Prudence and Matilda as well as 3 boys starting Electrical Engineering courses at Kenya Power –congratulations to all of them for overcoming their hardships and striving to make a better life for themselves and their families.

Jackie Newbold Sponsorship coordinator

Rudi Tena (come back again!) – Gavin Macpherson

After a five-year break from being part of a Giraffe project team in Nairobi it was exciting to be flying out once more to Kenya. It is always difficult to decide what the main focus will be on a trip like this and often the best-laid plans have to be changed to fit the circumstances. However, we did manage to successfully accomplish most of the planned tasks. The majority of the team had a marathon of a journey to get to Nairobi and there was little time to recover before we had to choose which team we wanted to join: the medical team assisting with the medical checks on sponsored students at Green Pastures and GEC (Tumaini students were checked by a team of doctors working in Mathare slum) or the film crew making sure that almost every student who is sponsored got a chance to send a filmed message to their sponsor.

The Giraffe Education Centre (GEC) needed a classroom refurbished and some new trees planted and Jackie also needed to distribute the many gifts that had kindly been sent out for the sponsored students. With so many students in different schools, this was a massive task, which was superbly done by Jackie and her team. Our first Thursday turned out to be a public holiday for Eid so our focus shifted entirely onto GEC. We organized a morning of sports, creative arts and a drama workshop and in the afternoon, the students of GEC entertained us with songs, drama and dance of an amazing quality. We also presented and ran a motivation session aimed at getting the older students at GEC to think about life beyond school

At the end of the session our students mentored GEC students in 'one on one' sessions which gave them the opportunity to share their ambitions and any problems they were facing in achieving them.

It was a really worthwhile trip and satisfying to see how GEC, in particular, has developed since I last came to Kenya with motivated teachers and positive students working together to provide a safe haven and place to study and grow for many vulnerable students. It was very sad to say 'Kwaheri' to many new friends but there is a plan to 'rudi tena' in two years' time to see even more progress and developments in this worthwhile charity.

You can read Gavin's full report on our website

Report from GEC Journalist Club

We are delighted that the Journalist Club at GEC has kindly agreed to furnish us with regular reports about life at school. Here is their first report sent just before the end of term in August.

We, the giraffe education centre family, are really happy because of your love and care and especially because of the visit of you guys. Lots of things have happened since you went. We had an election whereby we chose a new prefect body. This was favourable to us since it helped us exercise our democratic rights. There were various posts such as; School President and Deputy, Council secretary for Academics, Environment, Games and class prefects. For the journalism club, we thought it was fine if we also held elections and now we have a new body which is in charge of the club. We have also thought that it would be fine if we produced a school magazine and immediately we finish processing it, we shall send a copy of it to you. In games sector, we had inter-class competitions for both the volleyball and football teams. The Form two won in the football boys match while the Form threes won in the volleyball girls match. They were each given awards and were very happy.

From one Giraffe graduate to another: Idabel Chege interviews Ashley Otieno

Ashley's difficult family situation meant that he grew up in an orphanage in one of Nairobi's worst slums and struggled to find his school fees until the Giraffe Project stepped in to support him. He now runs his own community organisation in Nairobi. Giraffe Project Graduate and 'Giraffe' reporter, Idabel Chenge, went to find out his story. Read the full version on our website.

In January 2015, after completing college, he starts a community based organization called the Hands of Help Children Organization and identifies three very needy kids. Their mandate is to support and promote the welfare of less privileged children through the provision of education and the three basic needs. At the moment, the organization can only provide for education and the two basic needs that is food and clothing, accommodation is a future aspiration for them. In the area they operate, they act as watchdogs of the less privilege children in the slum areas. I can almost identify why he would choose to help people he didn't even know but I still ask, just so I can put it here in his own words. 'I am not an orphan, I have both parents but I went through such a rough childhood. My parents were there but they couldn't help me. I am not alone, there are other kids going through the same things I did right here in the community, and there is no one to help them or take care of them...,they don't have a voice to speak themselves. That is what pushed me to start this organization, to help someone, to be their voice', he says.



Enjoying the GEC concert in the new classroom. Doors open between the 2 classrooms making a really versatile space



Helping to read a letter from a sponsor



It's always a pleasure to get to know the kids at GEC

Congratulations to the fantastic runners in the Brussels 20k 2016. They raised just under 20,000euros (a euro/metre!) - an amazing amount which will keep GEC running for another year. Thank you so much!



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Ashley and some of the children in his organisation



Assisting with the Green Pastures medicals



With a team of six, he registers the organization and rents a small *mabati*(tin) house to serve as an office. A year and some months later, his journey has just begun. With no benefactors and having to find ways to keep the organization running such as tutoring computer studies, designing cards as well as typing eulogies, he relies on well-wishers to donate books and clothes for the children which seem to be, to some, something very minor but it goes a long way. When you choose to pay a certain amount of money for a child you have never met in a faraway place, you give this child hope, a chance to be someone who will change his or her community, and you might imagine that all you did was pay a certain amount of money every term to give this child education, but it is much, much more than that.

He currently has a total of seventy eight children ranging from two to fourteen years old under his wing. Can you see the ripple effect? One wonderful lady took it upon herself to see to it that Ashley had an education, now Ashley has made it his sole purpose that these seventy eight children have the best shot in getting on by doing something as simple as providing school supplies, food and moral support like counselling for these children. The same way you have been there for the children you sponsor here in Kenya. It has not been an easy journey for him but better is the end of the journey than the beginning of it.

The Lucky Girl by Diana Muthoni

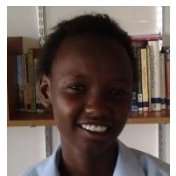
A poem by Diana, a Form 1 student at GEC. Diana is an orphan living with her grandmother and 9 other grandchildren in extreme poverty. Diane has tried to express in verse how she felt when offered the opportunity to go to secondary school.

Before I met you Giraffe Project,
My life was going to an end,
After my KCPE examination,
I thought everything was over,
My whole life was in total darkness.

But when I got into Giraffe,
Everything in my life changed,
At last I had some hopes in the future,
God really answered my prayers.

Crying and weeping every night on my bed,
Only my pillow can tell,
I thought and asked for God,
Father "Why have you forsaken me,
Left me in this cruel world all by myself?"

Thanks to you - really,
My life is improving,
You have made me a hero,
Even though I was a zero,
What more can I say - but
two little wordsThank You



No place to join in Form One,
How I wished I was in class,
Doing mathematics and Chemistry,
To pursue my career as a gynaecologist.



Contact us at:
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