



Spring 2009

HEKIMA
PLACE

This newsletter is created for the friends and family of Hekima Place – to let you know how your support with prayers and donations has changed lives of the girls at Hekima Place. We thank the benefactors for donating their time and for underwriting the production of this newsletter.

Somebody Made a Change in My Life

My name is Leah and I am one of the girls in Hekima Place....privileged to have a chance to make a difference in my own life and in the world....by getting a golden chance to go to school.

I was a girl who was lost, with no hope for the future. I come from a family headed by a single mother who is alcoholic, who came home late at night and very drunk. My two sisters could not bear that, so they married and moved away. My brother went off to look for a “better life” and I was left alone with my mother. I rarely went to school for lack of school fees and lack of food. When I did go to school, I was so far behind, I failed my exams. Back in the village, I looked for someone to employ me as a house girl. On the other hand, if I had passed the exams, I still would have been a house girl, since my Mother couldn’t find the five hundred per term for primary school, so how could she ever find the twenty thousand per term for high school?

I was back in the village for two months when I heard of a “girl project” that was started by a Boys Home nearby. Out of twenty girls that joined up, after some time, only two of us remained, as the others either married or took up drinking. We encouraged each other, that somehow God would find us the high school fees we needed. For sure, God came through this loving woman who started a girls home and we were told that we will be joining her and she will take us to school and live with us. So almost four years ago, the big day came, and we started a life very different to the one I had led before in the village.

I couldn’t believe my eyes that I had my own bed which I had never had since I was born; I was to live in a house that was very safe inside, and the most important one - I had the chance to go to Secondary School. Since then, all has changed and I am now in



Leah enjoys her first snow by building a snowman during her visit to Pittsburgh with Kate Fletcher in December 2008. She said it was “cold,” but she loved it.

my third year of Secondary, hoping to achieve my goals and make a difference in the world. At Hekima Place I have all that I need to make me a star. I would like to thank all the people who help our home grow more and more. May the Lord who gives, grant you all that you need.

By Leah

Hekima Place Volunteer Shares Her Experience

Hekima Place was first mentioned to me as I was out on a daily morning walk with a friend and neighbor. Her friend, Lorraine Jardine, was planning to volunteer at this girls' home in Kenya. My friend mentioned it as something I might want to do some time in my upcoming retirement. As it turned out, Lorraine and I went together to Hekima Place in Karen, Kenya in the fall of 2007. It proved to be a fascinating, eye-opening and rewarding experience.

We lived and worked with Kate Fletcher, the founder and director of Hekima Place. As both Lorraine and I were retired teachers, Kate had arranged for us to work at Hekima Primary School. Our duties included working with students in the resource room focusing on math and English reading skills. We also worked in the classrooms with the teachers, sharing ideas and assisting in instruction. Evenings found us working with the girls during study time after dinner. The five weeks we were there flew by. By the time we were ready to leave, I had already committed to returning in January, 2009.

I kept in touch with Kate and a few teachers at Hekima Primary School. Kate visited during December 2007 and in June 2008 during fundraising visits in the U.S. and Canada. By January 2009, plans were in place for teacher training and team teaching at Hekima Primary. Going back to Hekima Place felt wonderful. The girls were a little taller and a few new ones had joined the family. Mum

Gladys, Uncle Victor and Mum Evelyn looked the same. Dinner at six and evening study time were just as fun and challenging as I'd remembered. In the year since I had been there, Kate had expanded the vegetable gardens, had a borehole dug and had expanded the property to include a new house with one more rented house in the works. Several more girls were now going on to boarding high school.



Volunteer Mary Jo Davila-Ryan helps the girls with their studies during her visit to Hekima Place in January 2009.

Returning to work at Hekima Primary School was great. I was a known entity now, so was able to jump in where I left off. Several new teachers were on board, a new library was being completed and a new head teacher was in charge. With a new partnership with the International Reading Teachers Association, books were purchased for the DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) program. Two math teachers started mini tutorials and the student support program opened a second room so that volunteers from Hekima Place can be better used. Changes take time to show results, but the February 2009 end of month exams seemed to show improvements in mathematics and English scores.

I had extended my time at Hekima Place and ended up staying two months. Will I go back again? Just as I did the first time, I committed to returning before I left. I plan to go "home" again in January 2010, and stay for three months. I may extend that, of course.

Mary Jo Davila-Ryan, Buffalo, New York

"Going back to Hekima Place felt wonderful."

Meet Gladys

My name is Gladys and I have been working at Hekima Place since it opened in August, 2005. I have always enjoyed myself working with children in lower primary classes where I was a teacher for ten years. Mum Kate has been a source of inspiration to me, and therefore, I have made a vow to work with these girls as long as I have life.

The girls have been good to me and also to the other Mums. They are cooperative and obedient and we tell stories about our past, present and future while we are doing homework, chores, gardening or any activity. They adore listening to my stories.

It's also delightful to see them growing into young adults, to see the kind of joy they bring to our family. My prayer for them is to be the best they can be, so to bring change to their own lives, their families and to Kenya.

About myself, working at Hekima Place has really transformed me in every way. Before this ministry, I was not able to hug my own child at bed time or when leaving, as it was never practiced in our culture. I never said "thank you" as often, before we all learned to use the "magic words" in this family. I see now, since Mum Kate has come into my life, how these things affirm a child, appreciate her value, make her feel wanted and important, regardless of age, tribe or background. I see that hugging is one of the ways to make a child feel loved and cared for.

I cannot even count the things Hekima Place has done for me; I feel this is the best place in the world to work. For me, this is not a job, it's a vocation, and I thank God for it.

Gladys Wambui Maina
Assistant to the Director, Hekima Place

Kate and Hekima Girls Visit U.S

We're well into spring, but warm memories linger of Kate's visit to the U.S. with Hekima girls Leah and Bea last December. They filled their month here with visiting sponsors and donors, speaking at fund-raising events and even "hitting the airways" with an appearance on KDKA TV's Pittsburgh LIVE Today program and a radio interview on KQV in Pittsburgh. They also toured the WQED TV studios in Pittsburgh to give the girls an inside look at how television shows are produced.

In Bedford, New York and Pittsburgh, a host of parties, receptions, Christmas angel trees, and some special events rounded out 2008 by raising nearly \$29,000 during the last two months of the year.

Our Report Card

The measure of most school work is captured in those report cards we all remember so well. It's the same for Hekima Place, and the girls have made us proud. Here's "our report card" – a quick look at just what our girls have recently accomplished.

- Mum Gladys, (Kate's assistant) is in her second semester of a degree program at Tungaza College. Kate and she applied for a scholarship for the next year.
- Emma is in her second year of a Bachelors in Commerce; she is concomitantly working on her CPA. This is at Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA) and also applied for a scholarship for her last semester. She earned six A's., one B, one C.
- Jane and Purity are in Form Three at St. Martin's where the standards are very high.
- Finah and Bea have also been admitted there for Form One.
- Coletta (Form Two) and Linet and Grace (Form One) are at Forest View Academy in Karen.
- Dorcas Wanjiko is in a two year catering course at Cardinal Otungu Centre; she is right around the corner from the three others above.
- Leah and Fiona are still at Brother Beausang Secondary across the street.
- Leah went to Provincial level with her drama club this semester.
- Among the primary children - 15 are Gold Star Scholars and went swimming for an afternoon with lunch included (marks over 400 - on a scale of 500).
- 11 are Silver Stars (scoring 350 - 400) and they chose dinner and dancing at Shade Hotel (a raised dance floor with a disco ball.....)
- 12 Bronze Medals – they went to a Rotary Fund Raiser movie (Marley and Me) and had popcorn and soda.



**HEKIMA
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A Place of Wisdom

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A Special Thank You for Some Special Events and Generous Donors

Last year, Kate inspired a group of young girls when she spoke at St. Patrick's parish in Bedford, New York. Juliana and Katie Zepf, Danielle and Nicole Meyer, and their friend Maggie Walsh (all between the ages of 7 and 9) decided to make home-made crafts to sell at a local fair. Proceeds from the "Charity Chicks" (as they called themselves) went to Hekima Place – they raised \$450 with parents adding donations to bring the grand total to \$750 so they could sponsor one girl for a year.

Support for Hekima Place is crossing borders in North America. Kassy Bailey from Bow Valley High School in Alberta Canada raised \$1,000 and Michele Van Barga of London Ontario organized volleyball tournaments with students, raising \$5,000.

And, of course, the generous support of the foundations that continue to help the girls at Hekima makes a tremendous impact. A special thank you to the Nathan Cummings Foundation, Domenica Foundation, Vista Hermosa Foundation and the Il Sole Soto Foundation.

Hekima Place is a 501 c3 non-profit organization. Official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free within PA 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.



Hekima Place girls from top: Arabina, Gracie, Ngendo, Janie, Wambo and Shiko thank all who have helped them with donations and prayers.