



Our neighbor, Rebecca, enrolled in Community Schools Project



Red Rhino

ORPHANAGE PROJECT

2015 NEWSLETTER

10 YEARS AND STILL GOING STRONG BECAUSE OF YOU!



It is hard to believe it has been 10 years since we purchased the five acres of land where the Red Rhino kids now live. Looking back, we remember all of the hope of what might be, and how one day the project might evolve. We really had no idea! It was hard to envision what the home(s) would look like, where the kids would come from, and who they would be. As teachers, however, we always knew that education would be the engine to drive our mission forward.

The children are doing great as you will see as you look through the pictures in this newsletter. Education remains the driving force. Of course, some children do better than others just like here at home. We must say from our experiences visiting Red Rhino, that every Red Rhino kid takes his/her education seriously: They come home from school, change, and within 20 minutes everyone is doing homework. No one complains. All of the work gets done.



With the solid base we have built thanks to your incredible support, we are now in a position to branch out and further our mission. After five years of being operational, we are reaching out to the neighboring community where many of the local children don't go to school because they can't afford a uniform and the mandatory "desk fee" (especially when they don't even have money for food). David Saunders' article inside gives a realistic look at the direction we are heading as we move into the next decade of Red Rhino. It is exciting to look forward and try to envision what Red Rhino will look like in ten years. With your continued support, we are positive great things will happen in the lives of

children who would otherwise not have any chance or hope of a bright future.

For the kids,
Greg and Susan Traverso





LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

I'm sitting outside of Fiona's office at Red Rhino. It's late Saturday afternoon. Gilbert and I just finished a walk around our three acre parcel and just below it is the new two kilometer long stone wall closing in the narrow rectangular space where they will build new houses. A six-inch water line from Mt Kilimanjaro has nearly reached our door. Property values have skyrocketed in the last five years.

Michelle is 10. Dennis 11. We're having a birthday party for them tonight. We'll dance until we're tired and eat cake with more candles on it than before. Next year we will have four kids in high school, Peter, Jennifer, Abigail and Daniel. Our family here, like our neighborhood, is growing up.

But not everyone here is prospering like our kids and the area. If you came to our neighborhood, it would no doubt seem to you that everyone here is poor, and that they are all poor in the same way. And by U.S. standards you would be right. They live in small, one or

two room, rented, corrugated metal shacks. They live day-to-day. But they aren't all poor in the same way. Most families manage. That is, they have enough money for food, some clothes, basic medicines and school fees. But some families lack these things. As a result, their kids are in and out of school and eventually are left behind. We know every one of these kids. They are our neighbors.

We've started a program to work with each family whose need outpaces them despite their best efforts, to work together, to co-invest, to feed them breakfast and lunch, to partner with the school, to make education possible for them.

It is the most cost effective way of doing real, life changing good. It is a way we will multiply the effect of our resources in the service of the least fortunate. It is a way we will love our neighbors as ourselves.

—David Saunders





AND THEN THERE WAS HOPE

I first met the children in the Red Rhino Orphanage Project eight years ago. I met them when the "Red Rhino Orphanage Project" was a concept, but the reality of the situation was that a group of babies were in a home called "Springs of Hope" which was suited to care for babies, but not prepared to provide a future for children.

When I arrived at Springs of Hope, I was introduced to a group of babies and young toddlers who wanted more than anything just to be picked up, hold my hand, and spend a little while on my lap while I read to them. I watched babies take their first steps, and watched sick babies struggle through the night. I grew close to the children, and I cared deeply about them.

Caring about them meant caring about multiple pieces of their futures. I cared about the basics of course; would they have food and shelter and comfort as they got older? I knew all of the best parts of these children, and more than anything I wanted them to have a future that was defined by a sense of community and belonging.

Near the end of my trip years ago, David Saunders brought me to the Red Rhino property. That's what it was at the time.... property. There were no buildings. There was a dam. We stood on that dam and for the first time I understood. My anxieties about Springs of Hope being suited for babies and unable to provide a future for the growing children were quelled. There was hope. As I stood on that dam and heard David describe the potential of Red Rhino, I heard all of the potential I had hoped for the children.

At the end of last year (2014) I was able to go and live on the Red Rhino property for a little over a month. There was much more than the dam on the property. I can't quite describe the joy of seeing the wrought iron "Red Rhino Orphanage Project" gate; the bougainvillea-lined pathways to the schoolhouse; the copper-colored, cross-melded support structures; and the smooth, stone-lined walkways to the beautiful dining center. Before even seeing



the children, to see the thought and intention that was put into their home was incredible. Then...to see them; Words cannot describe.

To see the Red Rhino Family in action entails seeing a whirlwind of activity. Most mornings the children are greeted by a warm sunshine and warm breakfast. There is a prayer before every meal. When it's not raining, the children walk to school. The walk is about a mile and a half full of 24 kids singing all kinds of songs as they skip and run to school in their adorable uniforms. If they are not at school, the children are riding bikes, swinging on swings, reading, having tea parties, and most importantly, playing "futbol" (soccer). At any given time there is a child helping one of the "uncles" (male staff) to clear rocks for a new path. There is a child helping one of the "aunties" (female staff) to mend school uniforms for some of the less-privileged children from town. There are children in the schoolhouse studying for exams with Teacher Jane. If it's Sunday, the children are dressing to the nines to prepare for a two hour service full of singing and dancing. The aroma of grilled vegetables and beans is always wafting from the outdoor kitchen where food is constantly being prepared. There are no iPads, cell phones, computers or video games filling up the children's days. The days are spent mostly outdoors. These children are a part of a family that works hard to create a simple, self-sufficient, wholesome and joyful home.

When I first met these children eight years ago, I was worried about even the basic parts of what their future would hold. Little did I know how well they would be provided for. Little did I know how happy they could be with a family that is so robust. They have a home that they are proud to be a part of.

To everyone who is reading this, everyone who has helped to create this community...I hope you fully understand what you have created. You have taken a vulnerable group of children and you have created a loving community for them. You have created a sense of belonging and contentment for the children who are lucky enough to be a part of the Red Rhino Family.
—Laura McCaffrey

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Wandering high into the hills south of the property, you are taken to a distant world; small farms and acacia trees litter the vista, spectacular rays of sun burst through openings in cumulus clouds, a city skyline is faintly visible through light pollution. The first time my brothers and I played with Steve-O, Lucky and Simon, among others, the idea of an orphanage seemed to be a temporary place to call home, so feelings of sorrow for children being "placed" in this home were apparent but could not have been further from the truth. Red Rhino is a home to sleep and eat in, to study and learn in and to grow in, but Red Rhino is also a family — dads, aunties and uncles, more brothers and sisters than I could count before first grade, friendships that will last for the rest of their lives. The strength of the bonds forged, the influence that is and will be spread, the words that empower all add to the wonderful place that Karan, Peace, Dennis and Abigail call home.

—Sam Richardson



GRANDMA PEGGY'S ADVENTURES WITH THE RED RHINO KIDS



Birding with Grandma Peggy; Long Tailed Shrike; Sammy's Bird Art; Peggy, Prudence & Faith.

BIRDING

With help from an ornithologist, Peggy Traverso brought lists and photos of the most common birds in the Lukenya area with her on this year's visit. With great enthusiasm she, the children and the housemothers set out to find them. On the very first bird walk 11 of the 32 birds were spotted. Walks through the countryside are common occurrences at Red Rhino but now have a new purpose. The children learned to draw birds and did some really nice art work about birds. A highlight of our museum trip (see below) was the extensive bird exhibit. The children were so excited to find "their" birds! Thanks to Dolores DeCarli for the idea and the art supplies.

NAIROBI NATIONAL MUSEUM FIELD TRIP

(Thanks to the students at Annunciation School in Stockton for raising the funds for this field trip!)

The trip into Nairobi was made by 15 Red Rhino kids and 14 CSP kids (a new experience for them) as well as the RR staff to see the exhibits. I believe the extensive exhibit of birds was the highlight, but we also saw exhibits on the history of Kenya, the cultures, the large animals, and up close & personal (behind glass) the live snakes of Kenya including the notorious black mamba. Before heading home we walked through the forests at the national arboretum – a long and interesting day.



Clockwise from top left: Kids heading into the museum; at the museum; the group; and everyone resting at the National Arboretum.

NEWS FROM RROP

Jaquiline ("Jackie") makes wonderful uniforms for our outreach kids. The price of a uniform is high and Jackie's work has helped keep our costs low. We manufacture the uniforms and provide them to the outreach kids at a greatly reduced price. Jackie started out coming to Red Rhino once or twice a week to help with excess laundry when our kids were younger. We soon discovered how talented she was! Jackie is one of the most versatile people we have working for Red Rhino. She has grown in the project and her involvement with the Red Rhino has uncovered her many talents and she works as our cook, part-time house mother, and seamstress.



COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PROJECT (CSP)

Some time ago we became aware of children of various ages in our general neighborhood who were not in school and were often on their own all day. Seeing an opportunity to make a difference, we began a program which enrolls children in the local public school and provides them with the necessary uniforms and fees.

Food scarcity is a reality for many of these families. While providing these children with breakfast and lunch at school, we discovered that many of the children already enrolled in school lacked food for their day. This was the impetus for partnering with the school and another group to provide food for all the children twice a day.

The CSP kids visit Red Rhino one day a week during school holidays and participate in special activities such as field trips (see stories on page 6-7). Their parents donate time to work at the school lunch program and at Red Rhino for various duties.

For the 39 children currently enrolled in CSP this is a life changer. Our Red Rhino donors are truly changing one life at a time!



I am writing this from my desk as a fully qualified and licensed doctor.

In March this year I successfully completed my internship and thereafter qualified as a general practitioner. I am now based at Maseno mission hospital whereby my three other colleagues and I run the hospital on a daily basis. With assistance

from Red Rhino Orphanage Project I have also placed several applications for my postgraduate studies and I'm awaiting responses from the universities.

In August this year I started constructing a small permanent house for my parents. The structure where they live now is in a deplorable state. I have completed the foundation and walls. I'm left with the roofing, windows and doors to finish it off.

Thank and may God bless you!
Wilson Njeri

CATHEDRAL OF THE ANNUNCIATION SCHOOL 8TH GRADE CLASS RAISES \$562 FOR RED RHINO

On May 1 the Annunciation School eighth grade class held a movie night in their gymnasium for all of the eighth grade classes within the Diocese of Stockton. These amazing students truly support Red Rhino's vision and quest to nurture and improve the lives of children in Kenya. Said the students, "As members of our great community, we are called to bring peace to the world. Together, we planned and constructed an event that would benefit the world, our peers, and ourselves."

The film, *Now You See Me* was presented to depict the theme, "Although one may not see it that does not mean it is impossible." The students also believe that "RROP has a vision that some may not see but is clearly becoming a reality."

With the \$562.01, the students thanked Red Rhino "for inspiring us to look beyond ourselves."

To that we reply, thank you!