



THE MUCH WE CAN DO

The Nairobi traffic cop and I were trying to arrive at the right figure. The one that would line his pocket adequately, and one that I might actually pay. I was more patient then and the amounts more modest. His final pitch was, "Let us do the much we can do."

The imaginary offense, the lost shillings and the wormwood have since faded, but the affirmation, like well-flung pasta, has stuck.

It's as good a dictum as any to capture what we had in mind in late January 2006, when, fortified by almost unimaginable naivety, Greg drove me to San Francisco International Airport and I got on the plane. In the self-allotted one year time frame, we would build, staff, register, populate and inaugurate the Red Rhino Children's Home, and be back for Valentine's Day '07. Right. There is no deception so useful in these times as self-deception. But, as we know, even a blind pig occasionally finds an acorn, and by grace and the hard work of so many, there is a children's home in Lukenya, where our children, yours and mine, live and make mischief. The place is the beating heart of everything we all have

imagined, and it always will be. Laundry hanging, balls flying, ugali cooking, goats escaping.

Red Rhino sits in a rural neighborhood, where giraffe, zebra, wildebeest and some very poor people scratch out a living. Families are often fragmented here, and poverty can grind the remnants into powder. We have always known that education is the key to changing lives in Kenya, and our kids are well along on that transformational path. It is, as you know, expensive to raise and house and educate children. Yours, for example. It's the same here.

So we have embarked on a program to help provide education for some of the very poorest kids in our area that we do not house. It's a School's Outreach Program. In a nutshell, we help cover the very modest school fees at the Mulandi School, just up the road from us. Assistance is purely need based, and each family wishing to participate is vetted by our own staff, housemothers and matron, who are tough minded in just the right way and know our neighbors very well. And the families, often with single

parents, contribute in specific, agreed upon in advance ways, which differ according to the situation.

The 25 or so kids in the program now are poor: Not enough food poor: Rags for clothes poor: So part of the outreach is a breakfast and lunch program at school. There's also a uniform exchange program where our Red Rhino kids' old uniforms, shoes and other clothes are passed on to these kids. We teach them about soap and its regular use. We assist with clothes washing. We de-worm them. There is an after school and Saturday study assistance program at the community center. Our kids help out there in a whole host of ways.

For a very small fraction of the cost of housing a child, we are able to insure education and basic nutrition and hygiene for a bunch of children. We have known for some time that this was how we wanted to grow. And now we have started. Small, for now, but not, we hope, forever. We have in mind to find out what is the much we can do.

—David Saunders

