



 **Red Rhino**  
ORPHANAGE PROJECT  
**2017 NEWSLETTER**

All smiles made possible by your support. You make a difference!

# THE EPICENTER

The epicenter of the Red Rhino Orphanage Project is Stockton. From its creation to the logos which came from students in the area, Stockton has been at the center. It is therefore fitting that **BellaVista Cucina Italiana**, with its location in the Historic Hotel Stockton, would host our most recent One Under the Stars Event. Like David said that night, if there ever was an epicenter of our town it was there, on that roof top terrace, overlooking the deep water channel, with the beautiful Central Valley sunset capping the evening.

As we look back over the year a lot has happened. Life has been steady for our kids which is so important. They are growing by the day. More and more are boarding at schools. They come home for weekends and live with us for the four months out of the year when school is not in session. Our staff continues to be a shining light and they are helping expand our Outreach Program which is going strong.

This year we are featuring **Gilbert** (pg. 4) who you might not know by name, but who has been the Rock of Gibraltar for us for over a decade. To the kids Gilbert is an uncle, a mentor, a consistent role model. Then there is **Wilson**, our first employee (who recommended Gilbert, his cousin, to us). Wilson's story is my favorite story (pg. 5). For a number of years we have been supporting the efforts of **Sister Agatha**. Sister's work in the prisons of Mombasa is critical and supporting her is a great way for RROP to live its mission in yet another way (pages 6-7). **Chris McCaffrey** ties in the historical roots to the project with contemporary times in story like only he can tell it (pages 8-9). Chris' article reminds us of our roots at the epicenter:

We are a far cry away from our kids in Kenya, but they know we are here. They are well aware of our effort on their behalf. They know how much we care about them and they send their greetings. As we approach Thanksgiving and take time to think about all we have and all we are thankful for, you can be assured that our kids give thanks each and every day for all of their blessings that they have due to your support. They know, as we all do on this side of the world, that we are all One Under the Stars.

Asante Sana (Warm Regard),  
 Greg and Susan Traverso, Founders, Red Rhino Orphanage Project



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Drummers: David Qualls, Lisa Rio, Jeff Gamboni, Kate Gerlach, Jesse Servin			



# THE EXCHANGE RATE

By David Saunders

We had the annual One Under The Stars fundraising event a couple of weeks ago on the rooftop terrace of Bella Vista restaurant in downtown Stockton. It was a beautiful early fall, valley night. Long, lingering sunset, fading summer warmth in the air; lovely food and wine, and people knitted comfortably together in common purpose. It was more like a family get together than a fundraiser. It slowly dawned on me why that was. Most people there had been with Red Rhino for years. Working, praying, and supporting the project steadily, like family.

But I wanted to talk about the exchange rate. I pay attention to it. I always know what the Euro is doing in relation to the dollar, the Kenya shilling, the Zambian kwacha. I call Bavnisha or Sankul at NIC Bank treasury department in Nairobi to get the best rate. We haggle over a few tenths of a point, and then settle somewhere in the middle. The upswings feel good.

Then, I was reading in the book of Job the other day. You remember Job. Wealthy, wise, respected, just, devout, prosperous in every way. Until he wasn't. In one very bad afternoon it all evaporated. His grown children – gone; his wealth – gone; his position in the community – gone; his good health – gone. He wasn't being punished for misdeeds, it was just inexplicably gone.

He wrestled with it, never blaming God, but debating with his "comforters" about his own culpability, about the cause. In the end he learned firsthand from the voice in the whirlwind who he, and we, are in the big picture. He learned the transitory nature of possessions, wealth, and status.

Everything was ultimately restored to Job, but not before he learned this:

"If you return to the Almighty, you will be renewed.  
If you banish injustice from your tent  
And consign your gold to the dust...  
The Almighty will be your gold  
And your finest silver."

To paraphrase:

If you use your goods, your wealth  
In the service of justice and mercy  
God, Himself, will be your gold and your silver.

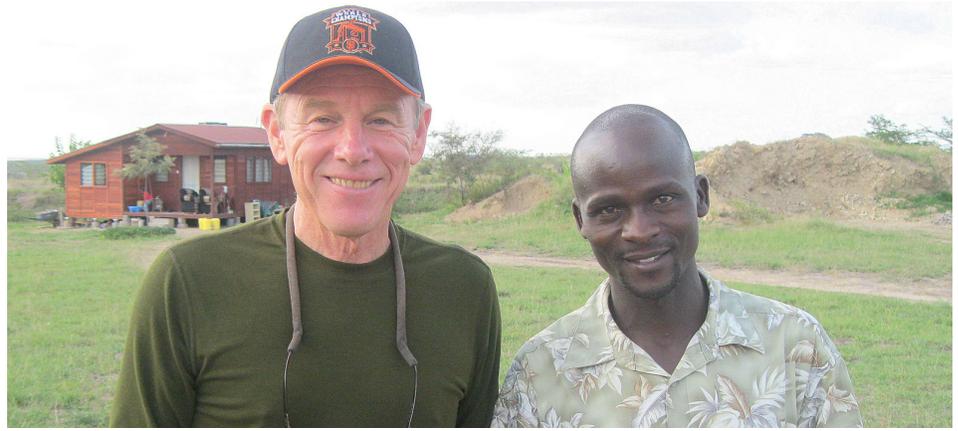
Now that is an exchange rate I would take any day, and one that all of you who have been working with us all along have gotten every day.

# GILBERT

No one is indispensable. It's a general statement that is generally true. But some people come pretty close. Gilbert Andere is one of those people for Red Rhino. Gilbert came to work at Red Rhino before there was a Red Rhino. He made the journey from Western Kenya, Kakamega Town, to be exact, to Athi River in 2006, to replace his cousin Wilson Njeri (now Dr. Wilson Njeri) who was leaving his job as the sole employee of Red Rhino to begin medical school.

I had hired Wilson to live on the then unfenced five acres that would eventually become the Red Rhino Orphanage. Wilson's main duties were to clear the land of the whistling thorn acacia shrubs during the day, and to chase off the hyenas at night.

By the time Gilbert arrived we were in the process of fencing the land. He and I oversaw that operation, and everything that came after until the construction of the compound was complete and the kids arrived from Machakos.



Since then Gilbert has managed every aspect of the day-to-day operations of the facility. He keeps the water tanks full, maintains all the buildings, oversees security, does the landscaping, keeps the roads in good repair, drives the kids to school and back, dispatches the occasional cobra, and does it all with equanimity and good cheer. He is the most reliable person I know.

Gilbert and his wife, Mildred, live on the property with their three boys, David, 9, Mael, 6, and Dalan 3.5. David came within two or three minutes of being born in our

pick-up truck as Mildred and I bounced our way down the rutted dirt track to the clinic in Athi River. Their boys are as much a part of Red Rhino as any of the other kids here.

It's not possible to recount the million and one adventures, mishaps, calamities and near calamities we've been through together over the last decade, but I am thankful that he was there for all of them. It's hard for me to imagine Red Rhino without Gilbert, and I'm mighty glad I don't have to.

—David Saunders

## SPECIAL DONORS

- Thank you **Shamrock Charities** for your ongoing support!
- Thank you **Lincoln High School Interact Club** for choosing Red Rhino as your International Project for the 2016/2017 School Year!
- Thank you **St. Mary's High School** and the **12<sup>th</sup> Annual Red Rhino Walk-a-thon Event Sponsors:**

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St. Mary's High School

# DEAR RED RHINO FAMILY,

I will forever be indebted to Red Rhino and especially to **Daniel and Renaye Garabadian**, who paid my way through eight years of university and medical school. I don't even know how much to thank you.

I have been in medical practice for two years after the successful completion of my internship.

I work in a local mission hospital where I am the Main doctor. This means I run all the medical departments i.e. pediatrics, geriatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, internal medicine, psychiatry and surgery. I have thus gathered immense experience in literally all aspects in so far as practice of medicine is concerned.

I am my own supervisor. It's nothing pleasant to be alone and overworked, but due to the shortage of doctors I have to. In so doing I have encountered the bitter reality of the inverse relationship between poverty and accessing quality health. The rot in health care prompted the doctors fraternity in Kenya to call for a nationwide strike that took an unprecedented turn and lasted for 100 days. We were just asking the government to be responsible and enable us to give quality health care to our country. So far nothing is forthcoming.

I am so much compelled to study surgery as my specialization. It has always been my dream and the encounters I have had with patients, who need specialized surgical care and can't afford it has affirmed my desire in surgery. I hope in future I will be able to open up a health facility to help these people. Most patients



opt to die because they can't afford the expensive costs of specialized medical care. It's sad. My areas of interest include: Orthopedic surgery, cardiothoracic surgery and pediatric surgery. I have placed applications for the same.

—Wilson

**Our mission is to empower some of the poorest and most disadvantaged children in Kenya, primarily through education, to become contributing members of society and leaders of the next generation.**

## IN OTHER NEWS...



Meet our newest Board Members, **Bria** and **Tim Shepherd**. Tim is the Executive Vice President of Pelton Shepherd Industries and Bria is an Adaptive Physical Education teacher. Tim serves on our Finance Committee and Bria is in charge of our social media outreach. Bria and Tim are soon expecting their first child.



- **Sheryl Beverett** joined the Red Rhino Team in 2014 as our Administrative Assistant. She continues to be a great asset to the Project, and we are so happy to have her on board.



- **Annie Hunt** has designed the RROP newsletter since 2010. Thank you Annie for all of your hard work on behalf of the kids!



# SISTER AGATHA MUTHONI

I have known Sister Agatha Muthoni for about a decade. I first met her when we were working in Machakos. She had organized a farming cooperative on three acres of borrowed land where grandmothers of primary and secondary school kids who didn't have the money for school fees planted maize and beans and watermelons and used the profits to pay tuition for over a hundred very poor kids.

We stayed in touch through the years. She led the dancing at Ronah and my wedding, and has since been transferred to Mombasa, the major port city on Kenya's coast, where she has started a ministry to very young children of women in several of the prison's there.

In Kenya, if a woman is pregnant or has a small child and is in prison, the child lives in prison with her until age four or five. Needless to say, these are some of the most disadvantaged children in all of Kenya.

Sister Agatha makes her rounds to three prisons, Shimo la Tewa, Udanyi, and Taveate. She brings soap, fresh fruits, eggs, diapers and many other necessary items for the kids there. She counsels the mothers, advocates for the kids, teaches them, and starts to pave the way for life outside of prison.

In fact, she has arranged for the first group of children who have left the prison, either to live with relatives or in foster homes, to be admitted to primary schools, and has arranged for their school fees to be paid.

We are her sole source of financial support. And she stretches every shilling she spends. We are fortunate and happy to know Sister Agatha and to be partners in her life's work of caring for and educating the poorest of the poor.

—David Saunders



*Red Rhino has been supporting Sister Agatha for many years. Her work expanded in 2013 in the Women's prison in Mombasa and we are her sole support. Below you will find a segment of Sister's original proposals—in her own words, and her call for support to which we did not hesitate. As David discusses in the article opposite this page, great strides have been made. Your support over these years has helped make this happen.*

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

**POVERTY LEVEL High** — Biased educational opportunities No equal opportunities for women, that cause stealing for women small things like chicken, maize, beans, money from rich people land, end up in prison.

**Polygamy** – For instance in a family of four wives with one old man to provide basic needs to them, it is impossible hence the wives end up fighting due to their struggle to get their needs for most of times they end up in prisons either for several years.

**Cultural values on women** – They are seen as part of man's property hence they have no right to decision making in issues related to their lives, if they make it is a case and due to that end up in prisons.

Sharing of responsibilities – Kenya set up – the man is seen as the " King " who gives orders and the women is the implementer yet all the credit for a successful family organization goes to the men, when the success goes to women, it leads her to prison.

**Goal** — To provide quality care hence improve the life of women in prison so that they may have life and have it to the full.

## OBJECTIVE

Catechism

Spiritual and moral counseling

To know their legal right

Physical exercise

Empower them with some activities like drawing cards, weaving mats, baskets, modeling etc.

Provide them with basic needs e.g. soap, pads, toothpaste, tooth picks, etc.

## FAITH FOR LIFE IN WOMEN PRISON

Dear Friend,

As you are friend I have decided to ask kindly to support to save the soul of children and their mothers in Prison. The children are between two months to four years.

What made me write to you is, I have met the following inside the room of women and their children in prison;

### Children's rooms.

1. The rooms are very dirty.
2. Some children have pneumonia
3. Some children suffer from diarrhea.
4. Some children have malnutrition.

### Women's rooms.

1. Some women are living with HIV / Aids.
2. Some women are very dirty.
3. Some women have already lost hope of living they want to commit suicide because of the frustrations they have.

With all these I have come up with the project 'FAITH FOR LIFE' in women prison.

### They need to be;

- A healthy and hygienic environment is actualized by safe life.
- The issue of pneumonia is lack of fast breathing and difficult breathing which can be treated immediately.
- Diarrhea is caused by germs that are swallowed especially germs from feces, lack of poor hygiene practices, malnutrition lack of poor feeding.

**NB:** Many women have lost their children inside the prisons because of diarrhea and vomiting.

### Women.

Those are living with HIV/Aids are lacking dynamics of change, counseling theories that can help them change their life meaning.

Change is personal

Change is permanent

Change is possible

Change is powerful.

So that they can feel loved, need to affiliate with others and be accepted. Those that are frustrated, lack counseling theories, psycho analytic theory according to human mind, the conscious level, the subconscious level. The unconscious level.



# A CURRENT AND RETROACTIVE LOOK AT THE RED RHINO ORPHANAGE PROJECT

By Chris McCaffrey

The Red Rhino Orphanage Project has been on my radar for quite some time. I first heard about the idea of the project as a sophomore at St. Mary's in Mr. Traverso's geography class, which was seemingly a long, long time ago. As a thought provoking assignment, Mr. Traverso had us draw layouts of a potential campus with amenities that we thought would be suitable for the children and their caretakers. I remember including a basketball court with the juvenile thought that kids wouldn't grow up to be normal without access to a hoop. Mr. Traverso and his wife actually owned the property in Kenya, and his interest in the project made us feel that we were designing something real. In fact, the project was as real as it gets.

A few years later (2007), my sister, Laura, went to Kenya to volunteer at a rescued babies center, which was in the vicinity of Mr. Traverso's dream property. For four months she held and grew to love the babies who had been orphaned or abandoned for a variety of cruel reasons. That rescued babies center was only planning to serve those orphans until they were five years old. When Laura visited Mr. Traverso's undeveloped plot, she knew if it would work, it had to be built soon. She came home determined to share the potential – no, the necessity for the Red Rhino Orphanage Project. Did the community

understand the impact it could have on these children? Would the community rise to the occasion? Would the children have the opportunity to learn, laugh, and love in some facsimile of a home/family? Would, against great odds, these children have a chance to be kids?

Beyond the Traverso family's dreams, yes, our community rose to the occasion. The grounds were actually built (with a basketball court!). Laura's group of babies had the incredible opportunity to move into their new home, and when she revisited them eight years later, she returned home with news of their progress. The vulnerable babies she had cared for had grown into outgoing, well-adjusted kids. She was happy to let us know that they didn't spend their days inside playing video games or complaining about their chores or their "siblings." She told us that they participated in the local community, proactively helping those less fortunate. They prioritized their homework over the TV. They knew how to cook, clean, study, joke, sing, pray, and enjoy life. She was impressed by their health and happiness and full of gratitude to all who had contributed to this unique project.

Curious to see the classroom assignment come to life, and these children who have made such an impact on my sister's life, I made the decision to go see it for myself. Having reached



my late twenties, an old man in some respects, I was getting ready to close the book on the current generation of kids. I'm a talker; always have been, and since I can't talk to a face buried in a phone, I decided to take a pass on this generation and see if I'm still around for the next one — or at least that's what my plan was until I had the honor of meeting the crew of kids in Lukenya at the Red Rhino Orphanage Project.

This summer I arrived at the property and found a group of welcoming, warm, curious, smart, funny, well-adjusted kids. They were totally normal, and I mean that with the utmost respect. There were no phones to bury a face in so they talked to me — non-stop!

I found them to be an active bunch, and my short time with them was filled from dawn till dusk. In the mornings, we gathered around the kitchen where everyone helped with cleaning or meal prep. The only complaints lodged came from kids wanting to do more when they were asked to sit down to eat. After meal prep, we prayed and then ate (spinach, maize, a variety of veggies, and sometimes some chicken). After each meal, the cleanup chores were done without any reminders or guidance, and then it was time to play. Soccer, basketball, marathon (a race around the property) ... the games were endless, and the kids were tireless. Most of the children participated in the games — with the exception of a few teenagers who were too cool (some things never change.)

In the afternoons, the children typically participated in some form of community involvement. One day we went to the local school and helped serve lunch to students. Another day we went to the community center (which provides children of the community with resources to learn) to help clean up/organize. One day we had a prayer service in which all of them read a Bible passage. They were expected to think critically and contribute their personal comments to a worthwhile discussion of the topic. Their critical thinking skills were refreshing to hear.

On Friday (during Lent), we went to the Stations of the Cross with enthusiasm. Many of the children participated in the service as altar servers, lectors, and/or ushers. Some of the younger kids dozed off in their seats, and I may have temporarily joined them — in solidarity of course. In the evenings, we watched *The Chronicles of Narnia*... every evening. Not the whole thing. We usually had about thirty minutes until lights out, and at that point, they would fast forward to the climax and watch the big battle scene, quoting every line... every night.

It is important for all who have been a part of this journey to realize the successful setting they have helped create for these children. Due to the contributions of our community, the Red Rhino Orphanage Project is not only fully up and running, it is an enormous success. It is a very uplifting and inspirational reality in this world of sometimes disheartening/disturbing news. The fulfillment of the project has likely surprised us all, and I can assure you that every one of those children would warm your hearts (even the too cool teenagers).

There is still plenty of work to be done to make sure Red Rhino continues to sustain itself, but rest assured, the original idea/dream has come to fruition. The kids are living, learning, contributing, playing, praying, and thriving in a safe, loving home. In the past 10 years, you have been continually asked to consider this a worthy endeavor: The proof of success is undeniable. Your contributions have made a difference. You have given the Red Rhino children an opportunity, and they have taken to it. I have seen for myself: they are a fantastic group of "normal" *Chronicles of Narnia* quoting, soccer (and basketball) playing, kind, family and community minded Kenyans.

Like Laura, I am grateful to you all for believing in and contributing to what was once a thought-provoking geography assignment. Due to meeting and thoroughly enjoying the fine representatives of youth in Lukenya, I am inclined to offer this new generation of youngsters another shot. The Red Rhino Orphanage Project has given me hope.

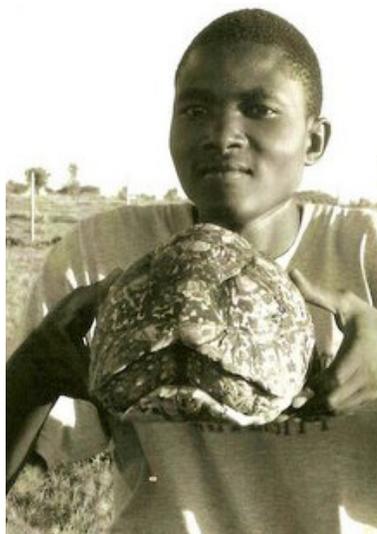


# “BUILD-A-BRICK” PROGRAM

With your tax-deductible donation of \$1,000 or more, a brick will go up with the name you choose on the wall in the main dining area of the Red Rhino Children’s Center. An engraved brick is a perfect way to commemorate a special person, occasion, a school or club, a specific graduating class, your family, or business, or anyone else to honor or memorialize.

*\*If you would like a brick put up at RRCC, please let us know when you send in your donation. Donations can be made online: [rrop.org](http://rrop.org)*

*\*\*Please note: If you have already given \$1,000 or more in the past and would like us to put a brick up at RRCC please let us know.*



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