

SASA

Sasa means **NOW** or **WHAT'S UP** in Kiswahili

every child deserves an opportunity.

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PAUL & EVA'S KENYA TRIP 2018

Paul & Eva have recently returned from Kenya and Eva brings us news of their visit.



Some members of our LEAF family



The Seven write letters to Sponsors

MEETING THE STEINER SEVEN

Paul and I arrived in Kenya on the 15th March and a day later we had torrential rain that set back our first meeting with the Leaf teenagers who are still at the Steiner School. But finally we walked through those gates a day later and in no time we were surrounded by our Dear Ones: Winnie, Christine, Junior, Diana, Eugene, Purity and Bright. They all looked great and greeted us warmly with their beautiful smiles and Paul and I were so happy to see them! We pulled up some chairs in a corner; they were laughing and excited and not shy at all! They asked "Where have you been!?" Apparently the school principal Judith had told them of our planned

arrival several days before and all of the previous day they'd been anticipating us walking through the gates! We had no idea. But now they are just so happy we have made it after all! We asked them what they wanted to do while we were over there. The first thing that comes to Eugene's mind is "Can we see the end of 'Babe'? You promised us!" A sudden power outage had plunged us into darkness about midway through showing it on our last visit 18 months ago and we had indeed promised to show it to them 'later'. We stuck our heads together and concocted further plans to make it happen.

VISIT TO KIKI'S SCHOOL

We are off to Rongai, our closest 'big town', next morning to do some food shopping for the weekend for a planned gathering of most, but unfortunately not all, of the older High School and Uni

kids, some of whom will be staying with us overnight. In the afternoon we visit Mbagathi View Academy, the high school which Kiki attends. It's got no view whatsoever but when we drive in the front gate Kiki materializes out of no-where: he had no inkling that we were coming! It's great to see him. He looks so handsome and grown-up. He can't believe we are there! This is a mixed boarding school and Kiki is in

form three now. After a while we go to the headmaster to get permission for Kiki to get leave to spend some time with us and the other Leaf kids on Saturday and Sunday. Kiki is not so happy at his school anymore. Some of the best teachers have left and one can feel spirits are a bit down here. Kiki's marks could be much better, we know it, and we urge him to work hard so that he possibly can change schools as soon as possible.

MOVIE AFTERNOON & CATCHING UP WITH THE HOUSE MUMS

A couple of days later it's movie time for The Seven. Paul picks them up from Steiner at 2pm and drives them over to our neighbour Katunge's house to show them "Babe". Katunge is one of Leaf's trusted helpers, looking after the general well-being and schooling affairs of Lincoln, Kiki and Patrick. Unlike the house that we rent, the house Katunge looks after has reliable power supply, yay! Paul has arranged sodas, popcorn and snacks and the gang is in heaven! I stayed back at Steiner to talk to the boarding 'house parents' and they spoke with love and pride about our Seven: how helpful they are, how polite, and warm hearted they are towards others. Junior,

Christine and Diana will leave Steiner at the end of this year and they are studying hard. Everyone is surprised at Junior and how he has matured and has academically excelled from the previous year.

Also I spoke with house mum Pamela about being the mentor and caretaker for these three school-leavers and helping them with getting into a good high school and she is very happy to take on that role. Pamela is also very proud how well her young foster-child Francis has developed. Remember the small abandoned boy who could not talk last time we saw him and who was so traumatized? He regards Pamela as his mum now and thanks to the support of the



Movie Time

Givers of Hope she can take him home with her during the holidays. Otherwise he would have to go to a government orphanage every time Steiner closes for a break. Francis is a beautiful happy boy now. He understood me quite well and he is now able to talk in Kiswahili. He is in year one but still catching up.



Patrick with Eva & Paul

PATRICK'S SCHOOL

On a beautiful clear day, our dear friend and Kenyan 'right hand man' Maina, plus Katunge, Paul and myself are off early for the long drive to Kadjiado, a town on the road towards Tanzania, and a 160km round trip over some of the worst

supposedly 'sealed' roads imaginable. Our mission is to visit 17 year old Patrick at his high school. When we arrive we get to talk to the head master and one of Patrick's teachers and both speak highly of Patrick and his efforts in his studies. The school has over a thousand students, beautiful grounds and gardens and good classrooms. Discipline is high on the list as we can see from the way the boys dash from one classroom to the other to avoid being late. Unfortunately we were not allowed to take Patrick home for the weekend and he was only released for a few hours to go out for lunch with us. He told us that he is happy with the school and that he shares a dorm with 7 other boys who have all become his friends. One of those boys is Brendon, a good friend he went to Steiner with. The boys have to rise at 4.30am each morning for review classes before school starts and go to bed

at 9.30pm after their last review class - bloody ridiculous IMHO! Patrick is very proud that he made it into the school soccer team. That also gives him the chance to play soccer most days and to get a break from the education madness that one finds in most high schools in Kenya. Once every term the soccer team escapes through the gates for a competition with other schools in different districts. Patrick is heart-broken that we could not take him with us to see all the other Leaf kids but he was so happy that we came to visit him. The sweetener we could offer him was a promise he could buy himself a pair of soccer boots in the holidays. We also told him we would give Katunge a phone for him to use in his holidays (they are not allowed to have one at school) and assured him that we would make arrangements for him to be able to meet up with Lincoln, his closest friend, over the holidays. That put a smile on his face!

AN AFRICAN LEAF GATHERING AT THE NEW BUFFALO DEN

After a morning of shopping with The Seven Steiner Kids, we drive them to Buffalo Den to meet most but not all of the other Leaf kids for a feast of Nyama Choma (roast goat). And it is a reunion too. A lot of the teenagers who have left Steiner and gone on to different high schools have not seen each other since we were here last time and are joining us: Saumu with her Muslim headscarf arrives on a motorbike (which we had arranged with her school), Brian and Kitty, Faulat, Sheila, her partner Barack

and their new baby Damien arrive in boda bodas. Damien is absolutely gorgeous and Barack is such a lovely young man (and good looking too!), we are very impressed and so is everyone! Of course they all loved the food, the sodas, music, a pool table to play on and most importantly the company of old friends who are dear and like family. But the hero was little Damien who was snatched up by all his uncles and aunties, smiling at them all and being loved to bits. All the Big Ones came back to stay

with us in the cottage except for Saumu as there is no sleeping space left for her. But I arranged for her to stay just up the road from us at Steiner with the younger Leaf kids boarders and other boarders and she is very happy with that, especially since Purity and Saumu are really close friends. The Big Ones and baby Damien had the best time back at our cottage. It was filled with laughter, singing and chatter and not one bit of crying from Damien!

SWIMMING EATING & BEING MERRY



The kids eat lunch



Winnie in the Pool

In the morning we all wake up to dik-diks and a giraffe just outside our front door and while we all have breakfast we are thus entertained! Later Paul brings out the drone we brought with us from Australia for all the kids to play with. Our eldest boy Brian has a go and controls it skilfully. Our eyes are glued to the white thing as it goes higher and higher, mesmerising in the clear blue sky...until it disappears forever, never to be seen again! Paul picks up The Seven plus Kiki and Saumu. On arrival at our cottage they all scatter around the place looking high and low for the drone. Only a call to the pool stops a desperate search. It is only walking distance to Maasai Lodge. The Seven plus Kiki plunge into the freezing water like crazy. Last time they had a swim was

on our last visit and they simply love it, teeth chattering! The rest of us sit in the sun and watch while grandpa Paul and grandma Eva are entertained by gorgeous Damien as well. Like a hoard of locusts, lunch back at the cottage is diminished in no time. Dozens of boiled eggs, ham, cheese, tomatoes and fruit. None of the mob had ever tasted ham before and they loved it. Then out came the radio, music pumping, teenagers dancing, singing and laughing, some just lying in the grass in the glorious sun. The giraffe from the morning came back investigating and munching away. She did not mind the ruckus of all of us at all. 5pm came all too soon, but the Big Ones have to get back to their high schools and boarding, and Faulat, Sheila and Damien to Ololo Safari

Lodge (where Faulat now lives permanently with her sponsors) and nearby Tuala (where Barack & Sheila rent a flat), before dark. Paul drives them to Rongai to get their various transports from there, while the Happy Seven and I dance on ... I even feel like a teenager myself, glorious!! Paul returns and I do the homerun along the 3km of dirt road to Steiner for The Seven. With music blaring, windows wide open, the mob in high spirits, we get a last look at our giraffe who is still loitering near our carport, munching on some trees. On the way back to Steiner we drove past a large group of astonished warthogs, plus numerous zebras, buffaloes, elands, Thomsons gazelles and baboons. I am sure they all thought: "It's like a bloody zoo out here!"



Annet, Eva, Purity & Jane

ANNET & PURITY AT ENNA GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

Today we are off to meet with Jane Njogu near Kawangware slum. Jane, our social worker and registered nurse in Kenya, has not only taken on our Lucky Moses as her son, she also is mentor to Saumu, Purity (Kevin's sister) and Annet. Jane is guiding us to Annet and Purity's new school. Annet is in form four - her final year - and Purity is in form one. We are greeted by George, the principal of

this smallish girl school of 200 female pupils located on the edge of the slum. Paul and I have seen many schools in Kenya over the years. Outwardly, this one doesn't look anything out of the ordinary, with all its students coming from very poor backgrounds and its consequent limited funding and resources. But it is George's attitude, compassion and personal interest in every one of his students

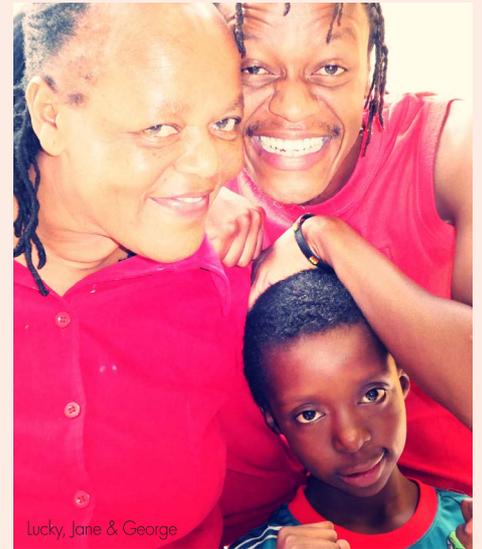
that is outstanding and it is discernible in the whole atmosphere here which becomes apparent later, when all the students spill out from their classes. Not mindless drills and punishment as is sadly the norm in most Kenyan high schools, but uplifting and helpful teachers, and happy girls radiating hope and excitement. So we are greeted by broad smiles when we see Purity and Annet. Purity in particular has had a very hard life and it has not been easy for her to get to trust people. Even though she has parents, neither of them are available to her and staying with one of her older siblings during holidays poses its own problems. She is very grateful that AL has taken up her support once more and the Givers of Hope are providing half her sponsorship. George has taken her under his wing and so has Jane. Purity herself is very happy in this school and shows much promise to take her chance to improve her life.

Annet is dedicated to her studies and works as hard as she can. She really appreciates the academic help of her teachers and has a dream to become a civil engineer. Throughout our time there she does not stop smiling! It is so encouraging to find a school like this and George assures us he will take care of any girls who are struggling academically or in any other way.

CATCHING UP WITH OUR YOUNGEST

After we left the school we drove up to Dagoretti Corner with Jane, to a shopping centre café where we meet with Lucky Moses and Jane's son George. We had lunch together and it is great to see how much Lucky's social skills have improved. Lucky is on the autism spectrum, age 10, and goes to a special school in Nairobi city. Jane and George are taking very good care of him and he is an affectionate and happy boy. He loves anything that has to do with computers and is very good with language. He does karate which has

given him self-confidence and the ability to stand up to other kids if he needs to. He makes friends easily and you can see how much Jane and George love him! Since becoming part of our LEAF family, Lucky has been sponsored by the Downs Family and also recently, thanks to Byron Menz Group and our Givers of Hope, Jane has been able to supply him with the extra support he needs like a special non-sugar diet and a learning assistance program at his school to help keep up with his peers.



Lucky, Jane & George



Paul with Saumu (front centre) and school friends

A SURPRISE FOR SAUMU

Saumu, our only Muslim member of the AL family, attends Hamda Girls Secondary School. The distance to get there is only 5kms from Rongai but it is a bone-crushing bumpy dirt road and very slow going. Finally we see the minaret of a small green mosque and the school is right next to it. When we had told Saumu at our week-end gathering

that we wouldn't be seeing her again she broke down in tears! Therefore it was really important for us to make it here as she really wanted us to visit and see her school. We also took along our Byron friends Brenda and Richard who support AL and came to visit us in Kenya for part of this trip. We got through the iron gate and a large group of

girls (who it turns out had just finished all their exams that day) were mingling around in that very corner of the yard and Saumu was amongst them! She was amazed to see us right there and was proud as punch to introduce us to all her friends. We were her visitors and we turned out to be a sensation at the school of only 60 students and 9 teachers! All the girls, teachers, and everyone wanted to meet with us, talk and take selfies galore. So we have skillions of photos with groups of laughing, delighted and sometimes very cheeky, gorgeous burka-wearing young ladies! Brenda had a dozen new Facebook friends in no time. We could not have found a happier school and our visit made everyone's day, a day that we won't forget! It is apparent that Saumu is very happy here and we are so pleased for her.

THE GORGEOUS SEVEN OVERNIGHT AT OUR COTTAGE



3 of the 7 at the cottage (Diana, Eugene, Christine)

At 3pm The Seven are ready to be collected. I take them home to our cottage where they will all stay the night, their last before the term ends and school closes. We'd bought a mountain of chicken (every Kenyan kids favourite food) which Richard and Paul were cooking on the BBQ. The Seven helped to make salads and put jacket potatoes in the coals and we all

enjoyed a delicious dinner and had serious dinner talks with these radiating, beautiful individuals! Brenda taught them a few party games which we all played and it was hilarious. I think I would give young Winnie Best Prize for Acting for one of the games. Winnie has really matured. She seems much happier in herself, always materializing out of nowhere to help and generally showing that she is really enjoying herself! The music was going full pelt of course and thus we danced away the hours and all tasks in between were done dancing; clearing the table, washing up, drying the dishes. Their love for music shows; all of them are brilliant dancers and for many songs they know all the words and thus sing along in unison! Richard and Brenda were in the midst of it all, fitting in famously. It really was a fun night!

The next morning we had to get up early as The Seven had to be back at school by 8am. Paul cooked them a breakfast of hot oatmeal porridge, which they loved and devoured passionately. There were tears when he hugged them before they hopped into the car. There were more when I hugged them at the school. We are family and good-byes are never easy. I could tell that for Christine, Diana and Junior, there was that knowing they would no longer be at Steiner at our next visit and it is probably a feeling that their carefree time is coming to an end. For all our kids, Steiner is and has been a family and a place where they could just be that: kids. Kids playing, being creative and having fun. I promised them sincerely that we would collect them, from wherever they were, to be able to spend time together on future visits.

REUNION WITH LINCOLN & CATCHING UP WITH ALICE



Kiki & Lincoln

We had organized for Lincoln to come all the way from his school at Nakuru to stay with us over the weekend after the Steiner School closed and to meet us in front of Kiki's school. He looked great and very sophisticated with his new glasses, which he wears just for looks as we learn when we ask about them! Kiki has also joined us and we give him a stack of revision books to help with his studies. Paul and Maina have come up with the idea of creating a study group for these two young men plus Patrick and Brian. Maina will buy extra foam mattresses and bedding to deposit in Brian's university flat and we will give them an allowance for food and the four of them are excited about the idea of spending time together and helping each other out in their holidays with any areas of school work they struggle with. We had a simple lunch with Lincoln and Kiki and then Kiki headed home to his aunt in the slum for the holidays.

The following day we drove to Kiserian with Maina and Lincoln to meet our 'orphan holiday Mum' Alice. It is a warm reunion with her; she looks great and vibrant as always! Alice and her husband Evan have been helping us out with the AL kids who have no-where to go in the holidays. They live near Ngong on a small farm. Purity from Steiner stays with her during the holidays and Purity's sister Ketty (formerly Cate, now back to Ketty) lives full time with Alice and

her family. Ketty is in form four and goes to a Swedish-run day school, the same one Brian used to attend before starting at University. Brian still stays with Alice's family too, occasionally. Frustratingly for all the university students, the lecturers have been on strike for many weeks now and Brian gets lonely in his uni flat. Brian is our main conversation this afternoon: he sent us an alarming account of some health problems he is suffering. So we arrange with Jane Njogu to take him to a special clinic tomorrow. Later we learn that Brian has heart problems and he takes special medication now. For the time being he feels much better and is now waiting to see a specialist and hopefully he will be all right. We love Brian; he is a very gentle beautiful young man, intelligent and caring, and a very proud uncle to Damien! In the evening it is lovely to sit on our porch with Lincoln and to talk into the night with a

couple of lions roaring very nearby! In the morning Paul sets up an email account for Lincoln. Now we can communicate with him during the holidays! We show him the latest photos and videos of the others he hasn't seen for so long and we promise he won't miss out on the next Gathering of the AL Family. Just as with Patrick, Faith, Annet and Purity(the elder), we were not able to get him released for the Gathering because those schools were in the midst of their exams. In some schools no-one can enter or leave schools during exam times because of widespread cheating going on.

At midday we drive Lincoln to Bomas corner where he catches a matatu to return to Nakuru. I am so proud of Lincoln when I watch him walk away. I remember him as a shy small boy with a beautiful smile and now he is this fine young man, 17 years old, self-confident and capable!



Ketty & Brian



Purity & Ketty



Eva & Diana

CATCHING UP WITH DIANA

Diana is a very capable and trustworthy secretary and admin assistant who manages our AL Kenya bank account and distributes the funds to the respective mentors to look after our flock in all these different schools and locations! The system works. Diana is a gem and we were delighted to catch up with her again. She looks absolutely beautiful and does well as a single mum in a jungle like Nairobi. Unfortunately her gorgeous 5-year old Alvin was unable to come with her today.



Faulat, Sheila & Faith



Sheila, partner Barack & baby Damien

TAKING FAITH TO OLOLO & OUR FAREWELL WITH FAULAT & SHEILA'S FAMILY

Finally we are able to get hold of the last one of our AL family: Faith. She is now in form three and doing well in Mwala High school near Machakos, some two hours drive SE from Nairobi. We can't believe how grown up Faith looks when we spot her in the street walking towards our meeting spot. She has turned into a beautiful young woman. Faith and her brother Junior stay with Rose Ingala, a teacher at Steiner, during the holidays. We have a surprise for Faith. We are taking her to Ololo Safari Lodge where she will see Faulat and Sheila, both of whom she has not set eyes on for ages. It's a great reunion when the three see each other. Faulat is in her last year of a Bachelor of Commerce degree which she studies on-line. She works at Ololo part-time while studying and she is the most beautiful person, inside and out. Faulat and Sheila (who also works at Ololo) are like sisters! Sheila has only

recently started work again after maternity leave and now must leave her son with a nanny during her working hours. Our grand plan is to all drive to Sheila's flat in Tuala, a very small town about 5kms from Ololo on another of those back-breaking dirt roads. Just before we are ready to take off we see a lioness in the National Park just across the river from us about 200m away, just walking along by herself in broad daylight! It's a first for Faith and she is delighted! Finally we drive over to Sheila's flat where Barack, baby Damien and his nanny are already waiting. They have a great little flat! We spent a few hours here, showing photos, cuddling Damien and talking. Faith is smitten with Damien of course.

It is really special to see Sheila and her family. She radiates total happiness. She tells me it is the most amazing thing to experience this amazing love of her little son, something that heals the wound of

being an orphan; something that also carries over to her brother Brian and also to Faulat, as they now all feel part of a family unit of which Damien is the radiant centre! Again we are so pleased too with Barack who is a doting and mesmerised father! I can't tell you how chuffed Paul and I are! More hard farewells, but knowing that everyone is doing well really helps and also that we will be back!

So there you are, dear friends and supporters, you have learned a bit about the goings on in our young and amazing AL family! Bless you all for your loyalty and sticking with these beautiful young people. You are changing lives by giving your support and love. Kenya is a very difficult country to survive in, and especially so if you are an orphan living in a slum with little or no support from others. Everyone sends their love and thanks to all of you and everyone hopes to see your dear faces over there one day. You will be amazed to see what has grown from your support!!

With big love and thanks to all of you,

Eva and Paul

WE WELCOME A NEW MEMBER OF OUR COMMITTEE

We are delighted to welcome a new director to our Committee, Kristin Ellis who has been co-sponsoring Faith since 2011. Kristin tells us why she joined LEAF.

As a mother of three, I am very grateful to have been given the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the lives of children who don't

have the advantage of growing up in the Byron Shire! African Leaf is a unique charity in that administration costs are next to nothing and many sponsors have travelled to meet the children in person. Everyone I have met who is involved with African Leaf has impressed me with their dedication and sense of pride and hope for the children in their care. I had the pleasure of meeting Faith, whom I co-sponsor, and her brother Junior, during my visit to Kenya in 2012. They were roughly the ages of my kids and I was delighted to discover that they were just the same at heart, playful, cheeky and full of dreams. The benefit of being supported by African Leaf, to these children, is incalculable, they now have a few more of

the life choices and chances that our Australian kids take for granted. I am proud to be involved with an organisation that makes such an immediate and lasting impact on lives.



Kristin, Faith & Junior in 2012

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

AFRICAN LEAF DANCE PARTY

Held on 28th October at the Billinudgel Hotel was the African Leaf Dance Party featuring DJ Massaganda, presenter of Sounds of Africa at Byron Bay radio station BAY FM. This was a free event which raised the amazing amount of \$8,283 through raffle ticket sales and a silent auction. We can't express enough our gratitude to Fiona Hunter, one of our regular supporters who had approached us offering to organise a fundraiser for us and who tirelessly organised the whole event. **THANKS A MILLION FIONA YOU ARE A GEM!!!** And of course our grateful thanks to DJ Massaganda who was up on stage from 2.00 pm till 9.00 pm. Our thanks also to all the helpers on the day and those who sold raffle ticket and to all the generous people/organisations who donated prizes for the raffle and the auction.

LISA HUNT AFRICAN (l.e.a.f.) DANCE PARTY

Another successful event was held on 26th November at Byron Bay Golf Club, where local and international artist Lisa Hunt performed for African (l.e.a.f.) Dance Party. The event raised \$4,400 through entry fees and raffle ticket sales. This was Lisa's second performance at a fundraiser for LEAF and we say a big **THANK YOU LISA AND THE BAND!** We are very grateful for your support. The attendees had a ball dancing to the music which was, as always fabulous and feedback was very positive. Our thanks also to the Byron Bay Golf Club; to those who attended and to all the organisations who donated prizes for the raffle.



Helpers at the silent auction table



Fiona (left) & Friend

OCEAN SHORES SHOPPING CENTRE

For the fourth year running, our admin assistant Susan set up a pre-Christmas stall in her local shopping centre, selling our gift cards and Kenyan

craftwork raising \$1,228 over four days. Once again our thanks to Veronica and the Ocean Shores Shopping Centre management and

of course to all the many people who supported us by stopping and purchasing.

LESSON 21 LEARNING KISWAHILI COLOURS

Njano Yellow
Kijani Green

Nyekundo Red
Blu Blue

Nyeupe White
Nyeusi Black

love • educate • acknowledge • feed

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