



Chance Encounter by Janice Trenholme

It happened in the elevator on my daily ride up to my office in Vancouver. Occasionally I would see and greet other people in the elevator. On one trip a gentleman asked me if I had been away because he hadn't seen me for a while. As it happened, I had just returned from our annual trip to Kakamega, and I told him about the volunteer work we were doing there for KEEF. His name was Mark Skinner, and we agreed to meet to discuss my trip. One thing led to another, and he offered to sponsor 2 students in 2016 (a 4 year commitment). Not only that, but Mark asked if we could use some assistance with our website design and maintenance. Up to that point we had only been able to afford a basic website, so this offer was an incredible opportunity to take our website to another level. Although we had a website, it was not as sophisticated as we would have liked. Now we had a professional web design company, Speed Agency, out of London, England which has kindly been helping us design and manage our website since 2016.

The following year Mark said his company, SSA Group, would sponsor 4 more high school students. The next year (2018) SSA Group added another 4 students to make a total of 10 students. These students were now being provided with a chance of a lifetime in getting a high school education -which is not free in Kenya, and something their families could definitely not afford.

Then in 2019, Mark generously offered more support and 20 students lives were changed. Fast forward to 2023: at the end of 2022, all of the students sponsored by the SSA Group had graduated, and many had were called to university. When we were in Kenya in this past January, I decided to call Mark to see if SSA Group would like to continue its partnership with KEEF. It didn't take Mark long to offer to take on another 20 new students in 2023! We were holding the new Form 1 Workshop two days later for the 24 new students KEEF had already accepted and notified of their success in getting a 4-year scholarship. Now we had to reach out to and locate another 20 qualified students in just two days!

You may think that finding 20 new students (scattered across Kenya's largest rural county) in such a short period of time would be next to impossible. On the contrary! We had interviewed 211 potential scholars over the previous weeks and had a lot of processed files of very qualified applicants, but no scholarships left. So you can imagine the cheering and excitement when I announced in our Kakamega office that SSA Group was going to sponsor 20 new students. Twenty more bright and needy students were about to be given an amazing opportunity to get a secondary school education!

THANK YOU, SPONSORS!

You are truly making a huge difference. The lives and dreams of over 150 secondary and post secondary students, their families and communities are being realized. Life changing..... Thank-you!

FORM 4 LEAVERS WORKSHOP

By Sarah Nabongo & Mary Wanjala

The form four leaver's workshop was held on 15th February 2023 at Sheywe Guest Hotel. The students came on time, turned in the borrowed revision books, had their photo taken, registered, and had a letter read to them from president, Alinda Ware.

The facilitators had a chance to take the students through the following topics;

If not university what else was handled by Dorcas Kheseli, the Deputy Registrar Academics Sigalagala National Polytechnic. Most students believe that if you don't go to university you are a failure, Dorcas told them that many successful people and professors did not make it to university but did not give up. Some of them began at the certificate or diploma level at Tertiary colleges and then onto university.

Career choices and university placement was handled by Levi Wanyama who is in charge of admissions at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST). Levi advised them on how to choose courses, how revision of courses is handled by the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS) so that they are placed in universities and colleges by the government.



Consider trades, was handled by Sarah and Mary, We encouraged students to engage in trades that can help them earn some shillings while in school and at home so that they don't depend on their parents and guardians. For example students can wash clothes for people, rear chickens, plant sukuma wiki and other vegetables for sale and plait hair,

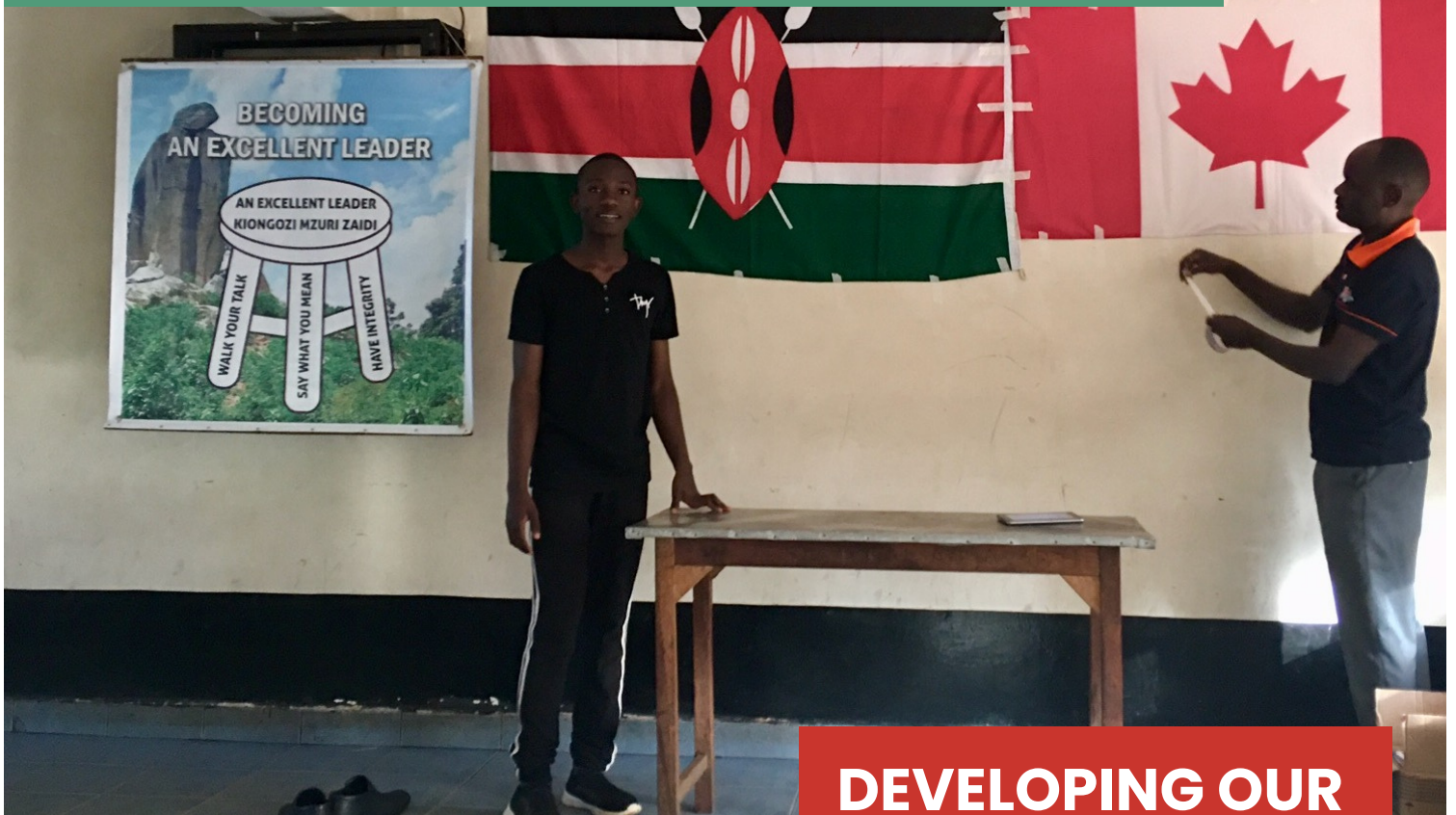
Sarah Nabongo took the students through finding fees for post-secondary, students discussed and came up with ways of finding fees for post-secondary. Welcome to adulthood was handled by Mary, Grace and Consolata. Students had a chance to list challenges they would face at University. Time management, negative peer influence, financial constraints, stress, alcohol and drug abuse, etc. and came up as well as ways to handle these challenges.

Consolata Agidza, KEEF alumni treasurer, took the students through KEEF Association where they were encouraged to be members of the KEEF alumni. She explained the need of working together as a team and networking with others. She also explained the registration fee and yearly subscription. Most registered as KEEF Alumni members

Sarah explained how the Marie Mackay scholarship was founded, John Kinyanjui, a KEEF KENYA student from St. Patrick's Ikonyero Secondary School, will be the recipient of the 2022 scholarship.

Rose Musungu, KEEF Board member, handed over KEEF certificates to each graduate and congratulated them for making it through the four year journey and emerging successfully.

LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS



DEVELOPING OUR LEADERSHIP

Becoming an Excellent Leader

By Alinda Ware

On Thursday, December 15, for the first time since 2019, the 3 day KEEF Leadership Workshops were about to start. The Grade 8 and grade 12 national exams were over and we could use the facilities at Fesbeth Academy in Kakamega City. The Kenyan facilitators and Janice, Dick and I were happy to be back together. COVID 19 had prevented workshops so this was the first time any of the current grade 9 and 10 students had been able to attend. The grade 11's had attended in 2019. The sound systems, classrooms and large hall were ready, student belongings had been stored on their beds, registration and photos were completed - we were ready!

Many students had left their homes before 6 am and travelled several hours to get to Kakamega so 80 boys and girls lined up with the cup and plate and spoon they had carried from home. They were eager to eat the tea and snacks they carried to their group's table. Many of them would have left home without breakfast, The 13 Facilitators and 3 Canadians volunteers got theirs off a table and gathered together. On time, at 11:30 a.m., the 2022 workshops officially began with the singing of the Kenyan and Canadian national anthems





LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

Our theme was Becoming an Excellent Leader (Developing our Leadership Qualities). Topics included healthy living (physically, mentally and emotionally), study skills, math and reading skills, first aid, resume writing, preparing for interviews, assertiveness, handling conflict, etc. The workshops were interactive, not lectures.

Everyone gathered to learn some basic financial skills and they all wrote a business plan for a small project they could start at home with little capital. Ten students businesses were chosen and each student received a 400 KSH (about \$5.00 Cad) loan. They will pay back 440 KSH so the number of recipients can grow. Projects like planting vegetables for sale or buying a chicken so eggs can be hatched are the most common. There are usually some chickens and a rooster running around so their chicken would have fertilized eggs for hatching.

Friday night students individually, in small groups and in school groups put on a talent show that was enjoyed by all.

A team building activity called Lost in the Kakamega Forest was held Saturday morning. The students were in 10 groups and each group had to choose the 15 most important items for 3 days survival after a plane crash deep in the Kakamega Rain Forest. They were to put them in order of importance and tell why. They had a list of about 20 items. First they chose individually and then they worked together and chose through consensus. When they heard the experts' list and why, they realized that their consensus list and reasons were closer than those done individually. Working collaboratively works.

Of course the ability to be able to find water and food was necessary for survival in the forest and having tasty food served up at the workshops was necessary for survival and satisfaction at the workshops. The students ate better than they do at home or school. After a hearty lunch they headed home with more knowledge, new friends, full stomachs and good memories. We adults headed home very tired but happy with the outcome and thinking about the leadership workshops planned for in November 2023!

Thank you donors for making the workshops financially possible.



A Message from KEEF Canada Board Chair

A BIG SHOUT OUT TO:

- All the Canadian and Kenyan Sun Run participants and to Shelagh Armour-Godbolt and Sarah Breakey for publicizing this successful fundraiser.
- The KEEF Kenyan Board, Sarah Nabongo, our Kenyan office manager, and her assistant, Mary Wanjala for successfully handling the workshops and project

The Canadian Board is looking for volunteers to assist with the newsletter and fundraising events and presentations. If you are interested please contact us by email at KEEFCAN2010@gmail.com



Photo Gallery



Grace interviewing a potential female student for a KEEF scholarship



KEEF facilitators Leadership Workshops



Susan Peake, past board member, doing her Sun Run on Nakasendo Trail, Japan.



A scholarship student reviews the KEEF contract with his grandmother