

Serving the Children and Communities of the Pacific Northwest

**PACIFIC  
NORTHWEST  
DISTRICT**

# BUILDER

**December 2006  
Volume 79 No. 4**

**A LITTLE LOVE  
GOES A LONG WAY...**

**The PNW Connection to KENYA**

*Kiwanis is a global organization of volunteers dedicated to*



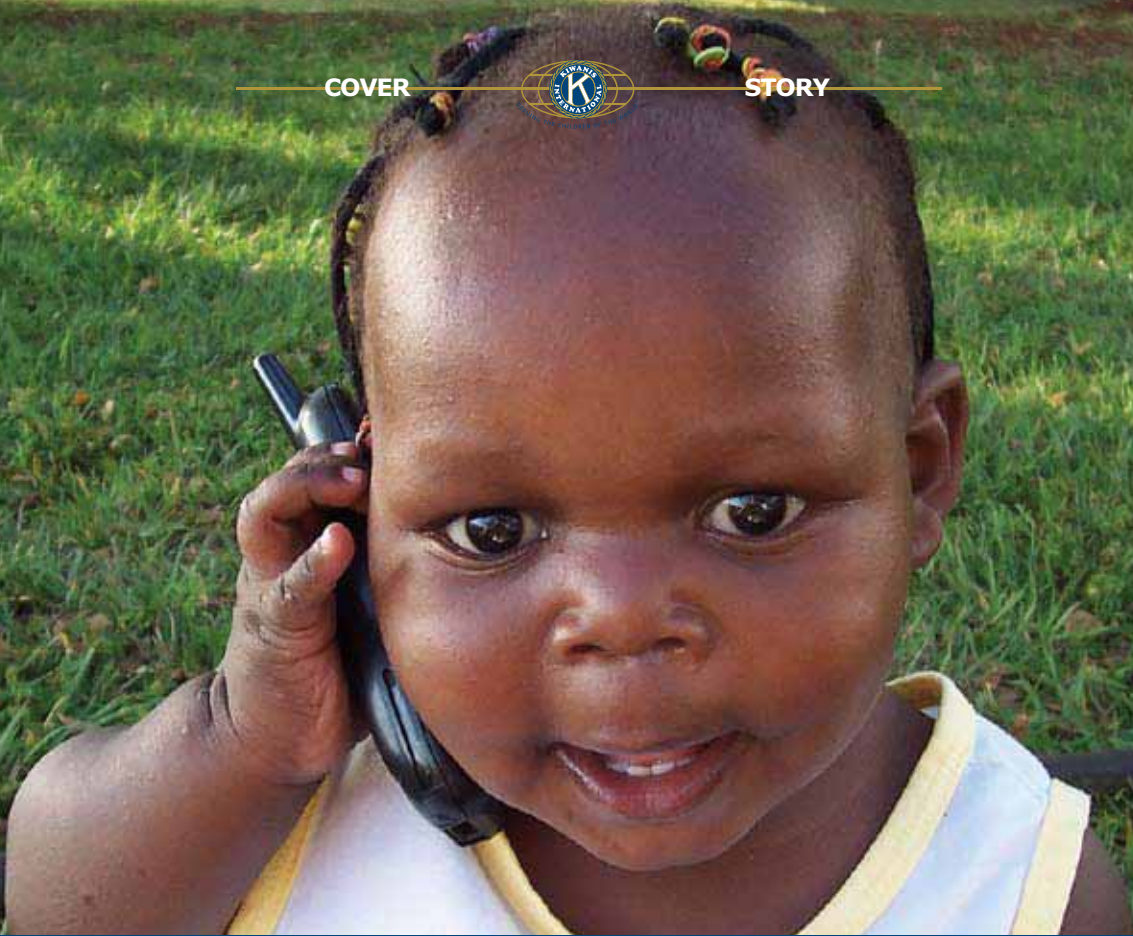
*changing the world, one child and one community at a time.*



**ONE CHILD...**



**ONE COMMUNITY...**



# ...Transformed Through Kiwanis Service



## The Kisumu Connection

*Most of us have heard of the awful toll AIDS has had in Africa, especially the many orphans it has created. For us, thousands of miles away, the issues and the numbers exist in the abstract.* The problem is somehow less real to us than the challenges we see in our own community, despite our overall higher standard of living and abundance of agencies to which to turn. When we truly focus our attention on the issues facing children in Africa, the challenges are so monumental that it is hard to understand see how one person can have an impact. Until...

...Until we see the pictures of Zawa (see pages 6-7). How could those two pictures be of the same baby? How could the pained creature at the brink of starvation be the healthy, beautiful, smiling child in the second photo? Zawa's story bring home to us the brutal reality of children suffering and dying in places like Kenya, but also the realization that we can save children – even from the brink.

But before telling the story of Zawa, we need to relate series of events would bring a caring young woman from the Pacific Northwest to Kenya and into the life of little Zawa in her hour of need.

### **The Role of Service Leadership Programs**

When asked what the most important message she had for Kiwanians in the Pacific Northwest, Rachele Strawther's answer surprisingly had nothing to do with Africa.

"The benefits of Key Club and Circle K are so important to what we become as adults. What I am doing now is the direct result of leadership skills from my time in Key Club in Circle K. It's not being taught; it's being given opportunity after opportunity after opportunity to continue to improve; working together in a positive way; achieving goals; [and] broadening horizons."



She has gotten jobs from her Circle K experience and has been able to speak in front of groups only because of Circle K and Key Club. "This is what makes Kiwanis so unique."

Rachele has embodied the principle that Key Club and Circle K are more than service organizations for students; they are also leadership development programs. Through her experience as a member of Key Club at Gonzaga Preparatory High School in Spokane, Washington and the Circle K club at Western Washington University, she learned how to manage her time, lead projects, overcome obstacles, and speak in public.

Rising to the challenge, she became Circle K Governor for the whole Pacific Northwest, and served with distinction. "I loved every minute of it. It was such a good year. I still look back at that year

and just go, wow, we got so much done. That really taught me to be a complete circus juggler – Circle K, family, school, my relationship with my boyfriend. Anyone in Circle K is pressuring their time, learning to compartmentalize their activities.

"I have never been more satisfied with a role. There was so much Kiwanis enthusiasm and support. The whole year, Kiwanis came through with everything we asked for. That was the first [Kiwanis Family Conference] to have a roundtable between Key Club, Circle K and Kiwanis. Networks are so beneficial to sponsored youth."

The skills learned through Key Club and Circle K do not disappear when members graduate; they are life skills. For example, when

Rachele went to Ethiopia to teach, she was told that she would be teaching English and typing – but she didn't know how to type. Thanks to her leadership skills, she managed to learn as she went, staying one step ahead of her students.

**A Club in Formation**

Patrick Kifolo heard about Kiwanis from a friend in New York. He became president of a Kiwanis club in Nairobi and told people in Kisumu about Kiwanis. The notion of helping one child at a time spoke to them, and they started to organize a club.

By coincidence, Rachele was planning to go to Kisumu to work for Women Fighting Aids in Kenya (WOFAK) and asked Kiwanis International if there was a Kiwanis club there. Learning that the club needed support to get chartered, she enlisted the support of her club, the Kiwanis Club of Bellingham-Kulshan, and Division 18 to help pay the chartering fee. In the end, she joined the Kiwanis Club of Kisumu instead of WOFAK.

Rachele has provided the benefit of her experience, but she is ever mindful that she is an outsider. The Kisumu Kiwanis club has the same kind of challenges that Pacific Northwest clubs do: membership, motivation, staying active.

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challenge is that there is no division or district structure yet to provide support. The closest club is an eight hour bus ride away.

While she feels that the club officers should be from the community, Rachelle has taken the lead on developing a program for about 50 Kisumu orphans. The program is not an orphanage; it is more like a Boys & Girls Club, providing meals, medication, and other support. While public schools are free, extra fees are often charged and students are required to buy uniforms. The Kiwanis club provides uniforms and helps pay extra fees. Children who cannot attend school receive special classes at the Kiwanis facility three days a week.

#### **But Back to Zawa...**

Word came to the Kiwanis club that there was a baby who needed help. The baby's teenage mother had died, and her father and grandmother thought the baby was cursed. They tried to cure the baby by feeding her only herbs, and by 10 months of age she was just seven pounds.

Rachelle and Anne Dwele, the secretary of the Kisumu Kiwanis club met with the infant's caretakers and the Kenyan Children's Department to work out a temporary custody agreement.

Rachelle renamed the child Zawadi (or Zawa for short), which means "gift" in Swahili. With Rachelle as a foster parent (and the help of physicians), Zawa has made an astounding recovery. Rachelle now has two children, Zawa and Maurice, in

addition to the 50 or so at the Kiwanis meal program.

#### **And Back to the Pacific Northwest**

Rachelle has been back in the Pacific Northwest to do some fundraising. It has been stressful for her, as she has had to leave Zawa and Maurice behind at the orphanage. She was a keynote speaker at the Kiwanis Family Conference in Portland, and Division 18 held a fundraising meeting (see page 11).

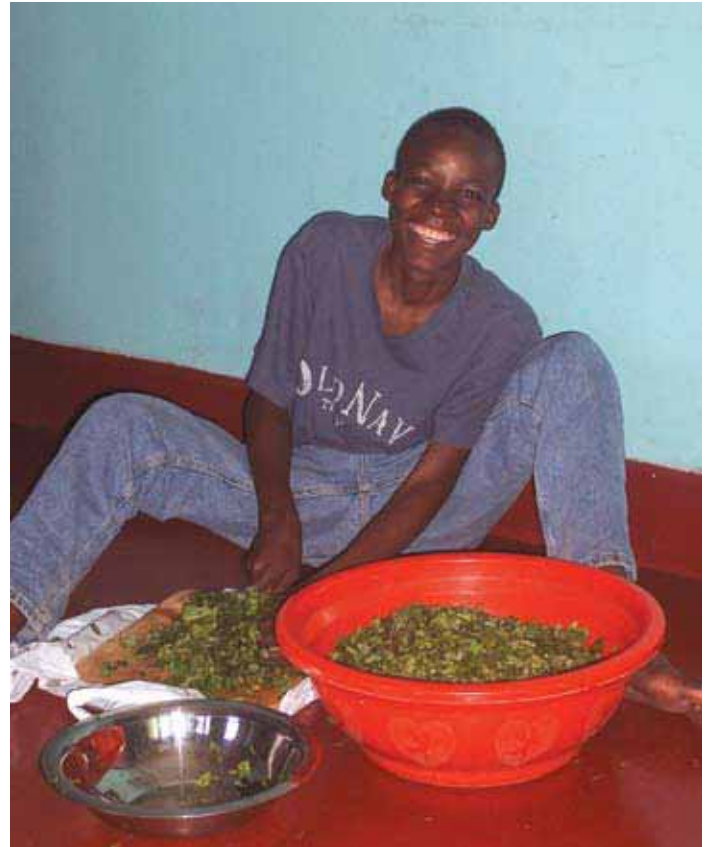
Ross Tanner has been standing in for Rachelle in Kenya. He attended the University of Victoria Circle K Club and served on the Circle K district's global services committee. He is also establishing a family adoption program that will provide livestock, business loans, or business funding to help families be self-sufficient.

Rachelle is looking forward to her reunion with Zawa and Maurice. There is so much that she and the Kiwanis Club of Kisumu can accomplish. The needs are great, but Rachelle and other Kiwanians are committed to making a difference.

#### **Remember**

When your club looks at community needs, pause for a moment to consider what a large impact even a small amount of money can have in places like Africa.

Through Rachelle and Division 18, the Pacific Northwest District has developed a special link to Kisumu, Kenya. Let's look at what we as Kiwanis Clubs and as Kiwanians can do to help.



*Maurice is seen above helping to prepare food for the Kiwanis meal program.*



*A young girl holds up a school uniform purchased by the Kiwanis Club of Kisumu.*

## How to Help Rachelle and the Kiwanis Club of Kisumu

There are a number of ways to help:

1. **Donations to Rachelle** will help her support Maurice and Zawa and enable her to spend her time helping other children in the community through her involvement with Kisumu Kiwanis. Contact her directly for more information:

rachelle\_strawther@yahoo.com

2. **Donations to the Kiwanis Club of Kisumu**

The Kulshan Kiwanis Club is setting up an account that will be accessible to the Kisumu Club. Send your cheques payable to Kulshan Kiwanis but be sure to indicate that the cheque is intended for the Kisumu club.

### For more information

Visit [www.myafricanconnection.com](http://www.myafricanconnection.com)

### Captions

*Cover Photo: A young student shows off a new shirt bearing the Kiwanis logo.*

*At right, from left to right:*

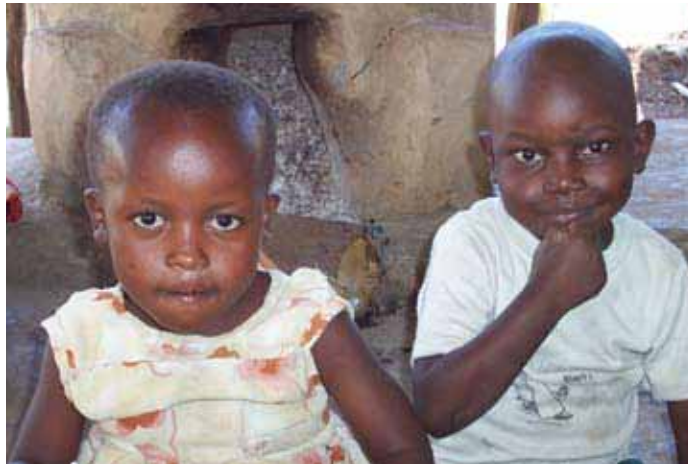
*A family portrait: Maurice, Rachelle, and Zawa.*

*Rachelle as keynote speaker at the Kiwanis Family Conference in Portland (November 2006).*

*Facing page:*

*Top: Sign for the Kiwanis Club of Kisumu.*

*Bottom: A final message from the children supported by the Kiwanis Club of Kisumu: Asante, or Thank You!*



The Kulshan Kiwanis address is:

P.O. Box 2028  
Bellingham, WA 98227.

3. **Buy a Calendar**

Calendars (\$10) sold raise funds for the Kisumu club; for more information visit:

[myafricanconnection.com](http://myafricanconnection.com)

4. **Adopt a Family**

For a donation of at least \$30 per month, you can adopt a family. That money will be used to purchase livestock, secure a business loan, or provide some other business investment that will

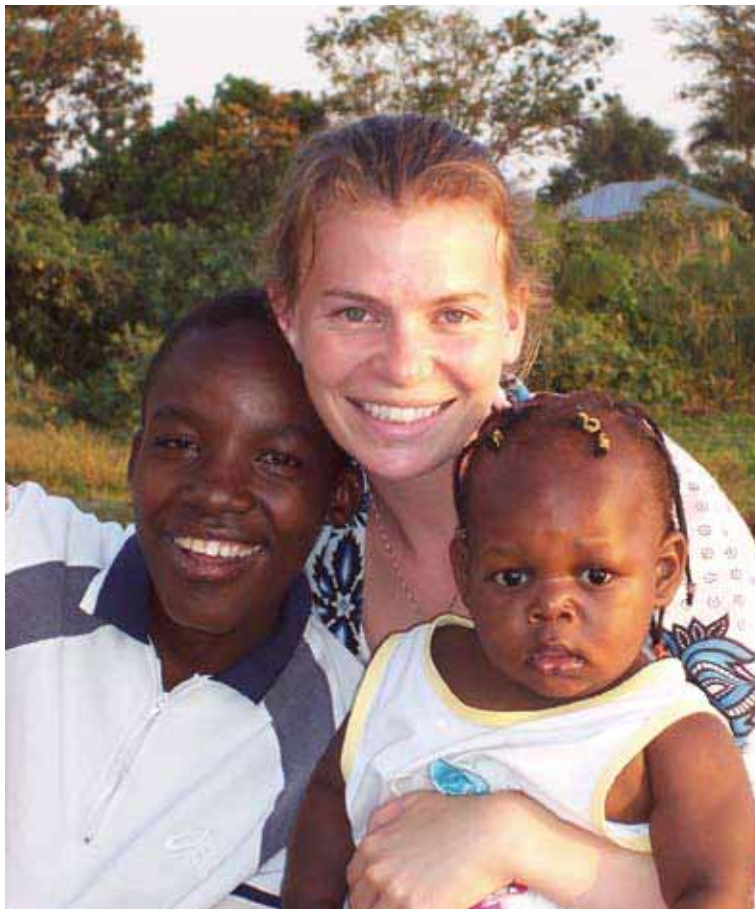
help a family become self-sufficient.

5. **Volunteer in Kisumu**

A number of volunteers have followed Rachelle's lead and gone to Kisumu to help out. If you cannot go yourself, consider supporting someone else who has decided to go.

6. **Donate Materials**

Because of high duties, the only materials that should be sent are books (they are duty free). The exception is if someone is going to Kenya to volunteer (what they bring may not be subject to duty). Overall, it is much better to send funds to Kisumu to purchase materials there.



## Division 18 Supports the Kiwanis Club of Kisumu

In the Spring of 2005, all ten Division 18 clubs sponsored a new Kiwanis club in Kenya, Africa, through International's World Link Program. Rachele Strawther, Past PNW CKI Governor and a member of the Kulshan Kiwanis Club, went to Kenya to work with an organization helping AIDS orphans. She joined the local Kiwanis club that was in the process of formation; they were chartered in June 2005. She is now working with them on their projects. She is in the U.S. now to raise funds and recoup.

The **Kiwanis Club of Clearbrook BC** hosted a fund raising dinner

on November 15 along with a silent auction. Items were donated by Kiwanians from all ten clubs and brought

in approximately \$4,000 for the Kisumu Club. Rachele brought African items for her own silent auction that will

help support her and three of the children in the compound. The Clearbrook Club had a \$1,000 match challenge to all clubs in Division 18.

The Kisumu Club has several projects they are working on including feeding AIDS orphans and donating school supplies to children. The monies raised/donated will be used to sustain these projects.

In addition to the above donors, a local company donated \$3,000 to the Kisumu Club. Rachele has many friends and family who contribute to her expenses and/or those of the club.

*Submitted by Division 18  
Lt.G. Elizabeth Bennett*

