



Northern Magic Fund

Christmas 2024

Happy Holidays from our Family to Yours!

HOW TO MAKE A DONATION

To make a secure, online pledge by credit card or PayPal, simply visit our website:

www.NorthernMagic.ca

Click on



Proceed by clicking on

"Donate Now"

Please specify your preference in the space provided:

- Donate where most needed
- Sponsor a secondary school student
- Sponsor a post-secondary student

OR

Cheques can be made payable to:

Northern Magic Fund
571 Brookridge Crescent
Ottawa, ON K4A 1Z3

Dear donors:

I am Lutz Tischendorf, a member of the Board of Directors of the Northern Magic Fund. It was my pleasure to have had an opportunity to join Herbert Stuemmer in early September for my second visit to Kilifi, Kenya. Five years had passed since Herbert last visited our beneficiaries in their schools in 2019 and it was high time to check in our current students but also to connect with some of our alumni—the growing Northern Magic family.

Let me share some of my impressions and stories of this memorable visit. I had been visiting with my family in Germany and had coordinated my flight to Mombasa with Herbert's from Ottawa. We were warmly welcomed at the airport by Mark, the once young boy who had tried to sell fossilized shark teeth to the Stuemmer family during their stay in Kilifi back in 2000. Mark, now 44, is a charming, reliable, caring man and quite an impressive entrepreneur. He has a unique gift of being able to deflate any tension with a big smile. We were immensely grateful to him for his help as he accompanied us to all the school visits, organized our alumni get-together and showed patience during our visits to the KCB Bank where there were a few issues to be taken care of that needed to be addressed in person at the local branch—one more reason for us to visit Kilifi regularly.

But let's talk about the most important part of our trip —

visiting seven secondary schools and meeting our 147 students attending Forms 1-4 (grades 9-12). We received warm welcomes from the principals and their staff as they assisted us promptly in reviewing student accounts, but also in meeting the students. The first good news is that all school fees are paid and accounted for and that all of our sponsored students (with the exception of one who was sick) were in school and had a chance to meet us.



Herbert and I with Mark and Elizabeth (a former beneficiary)

On this visit, rather than interview each student individually (which seemed impossible to do in just four days), we met with groups of students, usually one grade at a time, and tried to engage in real conversations. This was not always easy. Herbert and I ended up doing most of the talking—about Canada, who we are, why there is the Northern Magic Fund and why you—our valued donors—give your money to allow them to go to school. It seems that a combination of shyness and intimidation, but also a very Kenyan-focused education system, leaves these students with little knowledge and curiosity about the rest of our world.

For example, very few students knew where Canada is located—or were perhaps not brave enough to speak up. Sometimes we had to break the ice and I think they will not soon forget having met us strangers from far away. I realized that for them, the Northern Magic Fund was a rather abstract entity that dispenses school fees until we explained to them that there are actually caring people on the other side of the world who make personal sacrifices for them to have an opportunity to go to school. I think they all now know, thanks to our visit.

We did not hear much about corruption compared to my previous visit when virtually every student mentioned it. It seems things are truly improving in Kenya although desperation and poverty still remain a concern. We visited two of our students in their villages, up to 10 km away

from their schools, and their living conditions reminded us that the daily struggle to survive is still a reality.

A big highlight of our trip was our 'Alumni Get-together'. It was held at Mark's homestead where Herbert and his family had first met him. As our week progressed, the number of confirmations grew rapidly and to our surprise, more than 30 former beneficiaries attended—some coming from as far away as Nairobi via night busses or trains—to be a part of this get-together. It was a wonderful afternoon and perhaps the official birth of the Northern Magic Family in Kenya.

It was not just rewarding for us, but also for our former students, to meet each other and learn about their own successes, professions and walks in their lives. Susan Chitsaka, our loyal 'extended arm in Kilifi', was also in attendance and encouraged everyone to look out for each other, to help each other and to come together as a family. I am confident that this spirit will live on.

Finally I would like to share two remarkable stories that stand out for me and are so wonderfully indicative of what your donations have enabled.

Let's start with Solomon, a former beneficiary of ours. We had been invited to his home during a visit in 2016. I recall driving about half an hour to his little village of straw huts by a quarry. When we had picked him up from his school, I remarked that he would not have the two-hour walk home that day but could enjoy the comfort of a ride in our car. Well, after our visit to his home was done, he asked if we could drive him back to school. When I asked why, he told me that he wanted to study for a few more hours. At that time, the secondary schools had electricity but Solomon had no source of light at home to study after dark. I had been so impressed with this determined young man who would then have to walk home in total darkness.

Here we were, eight years later, visiting that same school when the principal

introduced us to a young man and asked if we remembered him. My jaw dropped. There was Solomon standing in front of us — proud and well-dressed. With a big smile, he told us that he is now a teacher at that school. How rewarding!

Next is Morris Mwangome whom many of you may remember as we had



Our Alumni Get-together

featured him in our Christmas newsletter in 2021. Morris had graduated from medical school in Russia thanks to a scholarship that covered his tuition and financial support from the Northern Magic Fund for his living expenses. Upon his return to Kenya, he had run into difficulties getting his medical degree accredited in his home country. We had not heard from him this past year but this changed at our Alumni get-together—because he was there. I was almost speechless when Herbert came to me and told me that Morris was there, just visiting from Germany where he is now living and working. I introduced myself to a charismatic genius

with a beaming smile and was flabbergasted to hear almost perfect German coming out of his mouth. As it turns out, about a year ago, Morris had been given an opportunity to join the GP practice of a fellow med student he had met in Russia—in Dresden, Germany. He is currently working there as a

medical assistant while on track to becoming an accredited German-speaking doctor in summer 2025! How remarkable is that? Now why and how was he in Kilifi while we were there? Complete coincidence or destiny? Well, he just happened to be visiting his family in Kilifi the exact same week we were there, and because word spread quickly in town that we were there, he made it to our Alumni get-together. I look forward to visiting him

in Dresden the next time I travel to Germany.

We left Kilifi and Kenya with good feelings and full hearts, knowing that things really are improving and that your donations have lifted so many young people and their families out of poverty.

With your help and caring, we will continue our work in Kilifi and look forward to bringing you many more heartwarming stories of our progress there.

On behalf of all of us at the Northern Magic Fund, we wish you a wonderful holiday season!

Share the Magic!

With so many worthy causes vying for your donation dollars, we are grateful to all of you who have chosen to entrust your donation to the Northern Magic Fund. In order to continue our good work, we need help throughout the year. New donors are few. May we ask your assistance?

When you are with friends, family and colleagues, help us spread the word. Please mention our fund and the great work we are all doing. We appreciate that one of the reasons you support us is that unlike other charities, many with very high administrative costs,

this Fund is wholly volunteer run, and apart from minimal expenses, your donation goes directly to the cause you intended—the education of Kenyan youth.

There are many ways you can help us Share the Magic:

- Directly sponsor a student — your commitment of \$40 per month will give a child the lasting gift of a secondary school education.
- Make a contribution to the Fund for the general pool of students.



- Host a fundraiser
- And most important of all, help us spread the word!

However you choose to help, your donation is greatly appreciated. A tax receipt will be issued for donations of \$25 or more.

Wishing You and Yours a Magical Christmas!