



SAFE HAVEN

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9 Comments



A TEXAS KIWANIAN USES HIS MECHANICAL KNOWLEDGE TO HELP CHILDREN IN AFRICA.

Story by Julie Saetre

As a master mechanic and owner of an automobile repair shop in Texas, longtime Kiwanian John Eanes knows his way around all kinds of motor vehicles. Little did he realize, however, that his expertise would one day be needed and valued in Africa.

This past year, thanks to a grant from the Galveston Kiwanis club, Eanes traveled to Kenya with Ed Sulzberger, executive director of African Childrens Haven. Based in Texas, the haven works to help orphans and young women in Africa.

While in Kenya, Eanes served as technical advisor on a project that brought a John Deere tractor to Mission With A Vision, which provides shelter and educational support to young Masai women. The teens have risked their lives fleeing their villages to avoid genital mutilation and forced marriage, both traditional practices of the Masai people. During the past 15 years, the mission has helped nearly 1,000 girls find better futures.

The mission operates a 10-acre farm to provide food for the residents and staff of its residential safe house and to generate income for operating expenses and scholarships. Until Eanes visited, all farming was done painstakingly by hand with short hoes and machetes. But that all changed with the tractor's much-anticipated arrival — once the young women learned how to operate it, that is.

For two weeks, Eanes trained mission residents to become heavy equipment operators, something they eagerly embraced.

“When we first met the girls, they were very shy and very reserved,” recalls Eanes. “By the time they got up on the tractor and they were plowing, it was just amazing to hear how excited they were to be able to become self-sufficient.”

Such independence is rare for these teens.

“It’s very unusual for Masai women and girls to get an education,” says Sulzberger. “There’s still a lot of resistance to it. And for young women like this to be trained as heavy equipment operators is really unique. We’re told that they’re probably the first Masai women ever to be certified.”

Adds Eanes, “It’s like they came alive as soon as they were able to start plowing. They were just so excited that they would be able to go to other farmers’ fields and plow for them and make money and make themselves better every time they do it.”

This story originally appeared in the June/July issue of Kiwanis magazine.

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KASIMIR KACHMAREK

July 3, 2018 / Reply


It’s truly amazing what can be accomplished when dedicated people work together for the good of others.

Like
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JAMES D MEEHAN

July 3, 2018 / Reply


That sounds like a great project. I am going to be in Kenya in Sept can you tell me what area of the country the project is operating in? Who might I contact about a visit?
Jim Meehan Pres Elect, Greater Woodbury Kiwanis, Woodbury NJ shirlock1@gmail.com

Like
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KIWANIS MAGAZINE (AUTHOR)

July 3, 2018 / Reply


African Children’s Haven is based in Galveston, Texas. The organization’s website provides an email contact, AfricanChildrensHaven@comcast.net.

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RICHARD BERLING

July 3, 2018 / Reply


Yes, congratulations to these motivated young women. Escaping the yoke of tyrants is always liberating. Hopefully their social options will permit their continued learning and achievements.

Like
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SAM SEKHON

July 3, 2018 / Reply


It is truly a revolution, a very good kind of revolution. Like Armstrong said about his Moon Walk a small step for man but a huge step for women in third world country.

Like
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JIM PUSKAS

July 4, 2018 / Reply


What a fantastic project! It has everything: Empowerment, practicality, game-changing and it’s a true down-to-earth initiative!

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JEFF STONE

July 4, 2018 / Reply

Reblogged this on [Jeffreyastone's Blog](#).

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JAMES KANTET

July 4, 2018 / Reply

Wow! This is truly a great initiative and as a person from Kenya, I don't remember seeing such an amazing project where young women train and drive heavy farm machinery. I call it "extraordinary" and bless the heart of Eanes for doing such a wonderful mission in Africa where farm equipment is a rare thing to see or find and if you find one it would be super expensive to hire. When I grew up, we used to use the so called "pangas" in Swahili or machetes to plant and weed crops. We also used a tool called "Jembe" in Swahili or "hand plow" to cultivate land. This was very tiresome. We need such projects in Kenya at large. It can help boost farming practices and also eradicate poverty in marginalized communities. I am so proud of the young women who are going through this empowerment. The sky is the limit.

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FEANNA JATTAN-SINGH

July 5, 2018 / [Reply](#)

That is a truly inspiring story, I hope to visit one day and see these women working.

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