



# Northern Magic Fund

Christmas 2023

## 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](http://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

As we approach the holiday season, our hearts are filled with gratitude for the wonderful support you have shown to the Northern Magic Fund over the years. Your generosity has made a meaningful impact on so many young lives in Kilifi, Kenya.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Diane Stuemers's passing. Diane was the matriarch of the Stuemers family who with her husband, Herbert, and three young boys, left their home in Ottawa in the fall of 1997 to sail around the world. For the entire four year voyage, Diane wrote a column for the local newspaper, the Ottawa Citizen, which was published every Saturday. Her compelling stories made all who read them feel they were part of the journey and left them eagerly anticipating her next dispatch.

In Diane's memory, let's take a look back at the history and accomplishments of the Northern Magic Fund she founded.

Although the Stuemers family's travels had them visit 34 countries, it was a small rural village in coastal Kenya that truly captured their hearts. It was there that they met a few teenagers on the beach who invited them to their homes to meet their families. These families lived in mud huts with dirt floors. There was no electricity and no running water and like most people living in this rural community, they grew all the food they consumed and purchased almost nothing. The Stuemers learned that school was not free in Kenya and therefore an education for most in this poverty-stricken area was nothing more than a dream.

A lot of time was spent with these families over the following few months in Kilifi and there were many long and meaningful conversations about what could be done to improve their situation. Although there were many problems requiring more immediate attention, it became clear that education was the key to long-term success. The Stuemers knew that they had to help.

When Diane wrote about this needy area of our world, Ottawa Citizen readers sent money to



Diane Stuemers  
1959-2003

help in any way they could. With these donations, the seeds of what would become the Northern Magic Fund were sown, marking the beginning of a commitment to help educate disadvantaged youth in Kilifi, Kenya. When the Stuemers family returned to Ottawa in 2001, over 3,000 fans waited along the shore of Petrie Island in the pouring rain to welcome them home. Over \$11,000 was raised at that homecoming event and it was with this money that the Fund began.

Once home, Diane turned the family's sailing journey into a Canadian bestselling book titled *The Voyage of the Northern Magic*. Sadly, just 18 months after returning to Ottawa, while busy sharing their story at public speaking engagements, promoting her book and raising money for the Fund, Diane passed away shortly after the cancer she had seven years earlier returned. It was her wish that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Fund. And were they ever!

Petrie Island, where the around-the-world journey began and ended, now has a beach-front park named after the Stuemers family and a monument with a plaque commemorating Diane's life and achievements stands on the banks of the Ottawa River as a true reminder that her dream is what began this magic we all share.

In 2003, our first primary school renovation was completed and over the next eight years, four more schools in desperate need of repair were renovated. The thousands of young children who attended these schools crammed into classrooms, sitting on dirt floors under leaky roofs now had a clean, comfortable and safe place to learn complete with desks, long-lasting concrete floors and steel roofs.

The Northern Magic Fund for International Development became a registered charity in 2004. Our secondary school scholarship program began with only a dozen students. Just a few years later and every year since, approximately 150 bright impoverished young Kenyans have attended secondary school thanks to the generosity of our caring donors.

Diane had written in her book, *"We've discovered there's no better feeling in life than to help make someone's dream come true."* As a Northern Magic Fund donor, you can share in our pride as we have now made the dream of a secondary school education come true for approximately 700 young Kenyans. It is well-known that education is the best weapon against impoverishment, disease, early marriage, early motherhood and gang activities. An education, something we here in Canada take for granted, is fundamental to breaking the cycle of poverty. These adolescents are far more likely to get a job, earn an income and support a family. As secondary school graduates, they stand a better chance of having opportunities for a constructive and positive life moving forward. Even better opportunities were provided to twenty of these students who were given the lasting gift of a post-secondary education. These students, top scholars in their respective high schools, attended University to obtain a degree in a wide variety of programs including Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Education, Community Health Nursing, Medical Biotechnology, Hospital Laboratory Technician, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical and Electronic Engineering and more. Half of these university scholarships were paid for through the kindness of donors who generously chose to continue the support of their high school student through to completion of their university studies.

One of our very first 'dreams come true' was for a remarkable young man named George Ouma, who despite it seeming an impossible dream, aspired to be a doctor. Although Diane had not met him, she had been made aware of this determined young man by his high school principal who said he was the brightest student their school had ever seen. Diane mentioned him in the epilogue of her book noting that *"One ambitious young man's dream is to become a physician. Although this aspiring young doctor doesn't know it yet, his future is looking pretty good."* A commitment had been made to fund his university education and the following year he began his pre-med studies at Kampala University in Uganda. Ten years later, George graduated as a Medical Doctor, scoring fourth in the Nation on his final exams. We could not have been more proud. After working in a hospital for nine years, George chose to continue his academic journey pursuing a four-year program in Radiation Oncology at a university in South Africa, a program unfortunately not available in Kenya. He has just completed his program and is looking forward to returning to his home and family early in the New Year. Congratulations Dr. Ouma!

George Ouma served as an inspiration to many other students in Kilifi county who had dreams of their own. One of those whom he inspired was Morris Mwangome who, just like George, had been passionate about pursuing a degree in medicine since he was in primary school. Morris had been sponsored by the Northern Magic Fund for his high school education which he completed with excellent grades. After working for a few years, he was offered a partial scholarship to Med School .. in Russia. Leaving friends and family behind, he left home for the first time in his life to begin a seven-year program in medicine, the first of which was dedicated to learning the Russian language. As the scholarship was for tuition only and he was not permitted to work to earn money for his upkeep, he had appealed to us for support for additional expenses like food, lodging, local transportation, books and medical supplies. He was immensely grateful to the Northern Magic Fund for doing just that. Morris graduated with a medical degree and returned to Kenya in 2021. Dr. Mwangome is happy to be home and continues to pursue his Kenyan medical license so he can work in his community.

Our Fund had made a commitment to visit Kilifi once every three years. On his return from one of these visits, Herbert commented that he had noticed a remarkable difference in the young adults who had progressed in their education. They seemed much more hopeful and self-assured than their less fortunate counterparts. He also noted that Kilifi appeared a lot more industrious than on previous visits. We like to think that the money and education we have invested in this area in the past two decades is at least partly responsible for this.

Diane would have been so immensely proud of the accomplishments of the Northern Magic Fund and overwhelmed by the generosity of our loyal donors. In her memory, we offer a heartfelt thank you to each and every one of you for helping us 'Keep the Magic Alive!'

## 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!