

ST. LAWRENCE

University Magazine

Winter 2012



Kenya Alumni Trip

Homecoming Returns

First-Year Convocation

A Journey for the Heart and

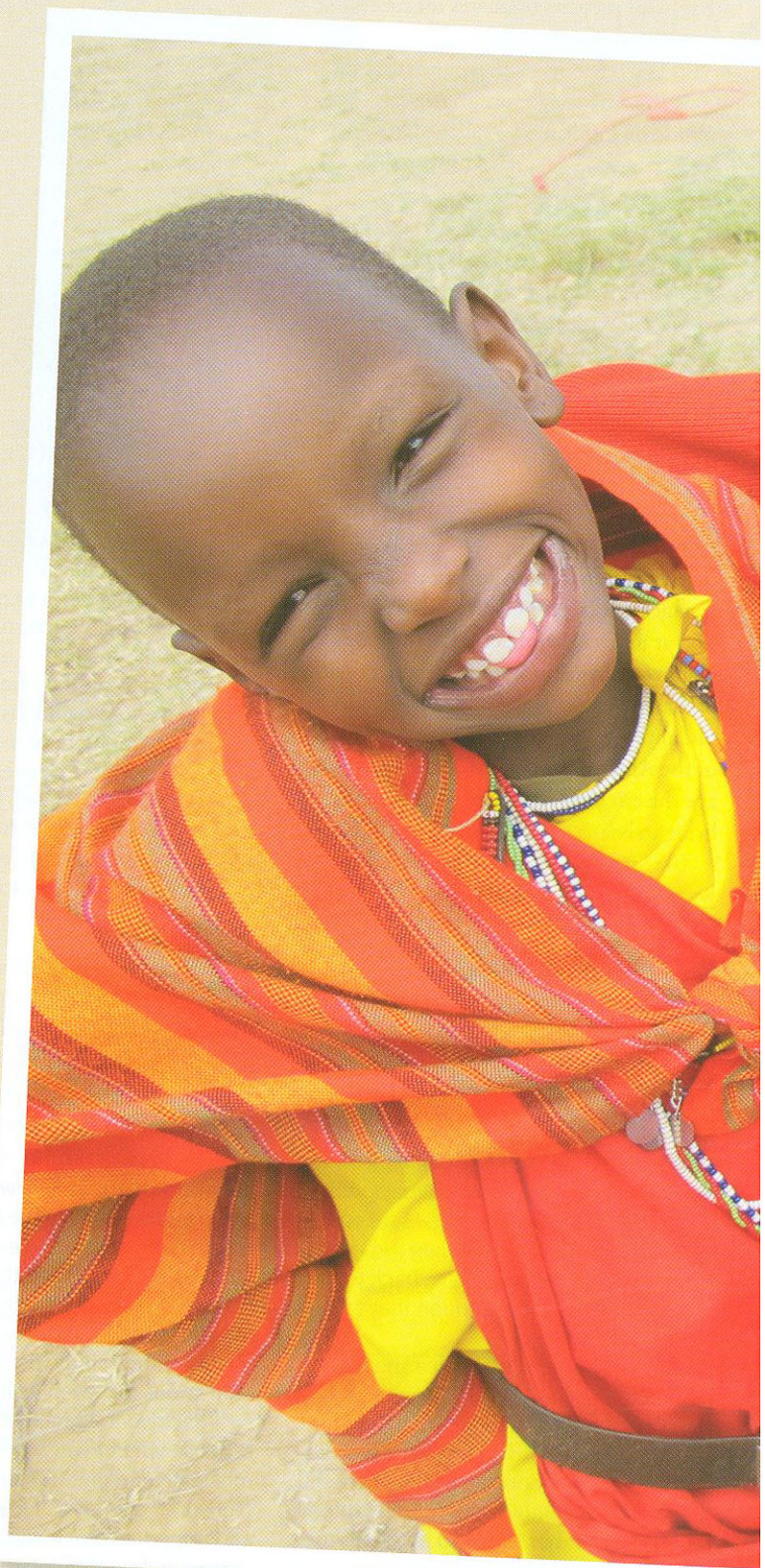
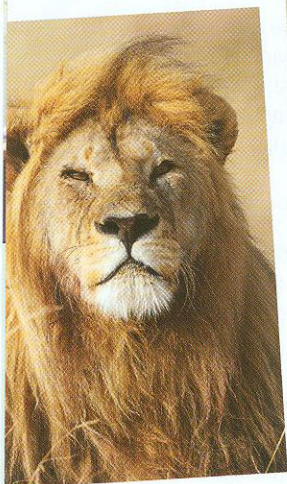
Reflections on Kenya, St. Lawrence's first Travel Program destination

St. Lawrence's new Laurentian travel program began in fall 2011 with a two-week journey to Kenya, chosen in part thanks to the Kenya Semester's "rich history at St. Lawrence and our unique connections to Kenya," says Director of Alumni and Parent Programs Kim Robinson Hissong '94. "More than mere leisure travel, the trip provided unique insights into the places and people of

Kenya" through the expertise of trip leaders Kathleen Perkins Colson '79, president of African Safari Planners and CEO/founder of The BOMA Project, and Professor Emerita Celia Nyamweru, and allowed participants to meet St. Lawrence students studying in Kenya, Hissong adds. "This new program is part of the University's promise of lifelong intellectual engage-

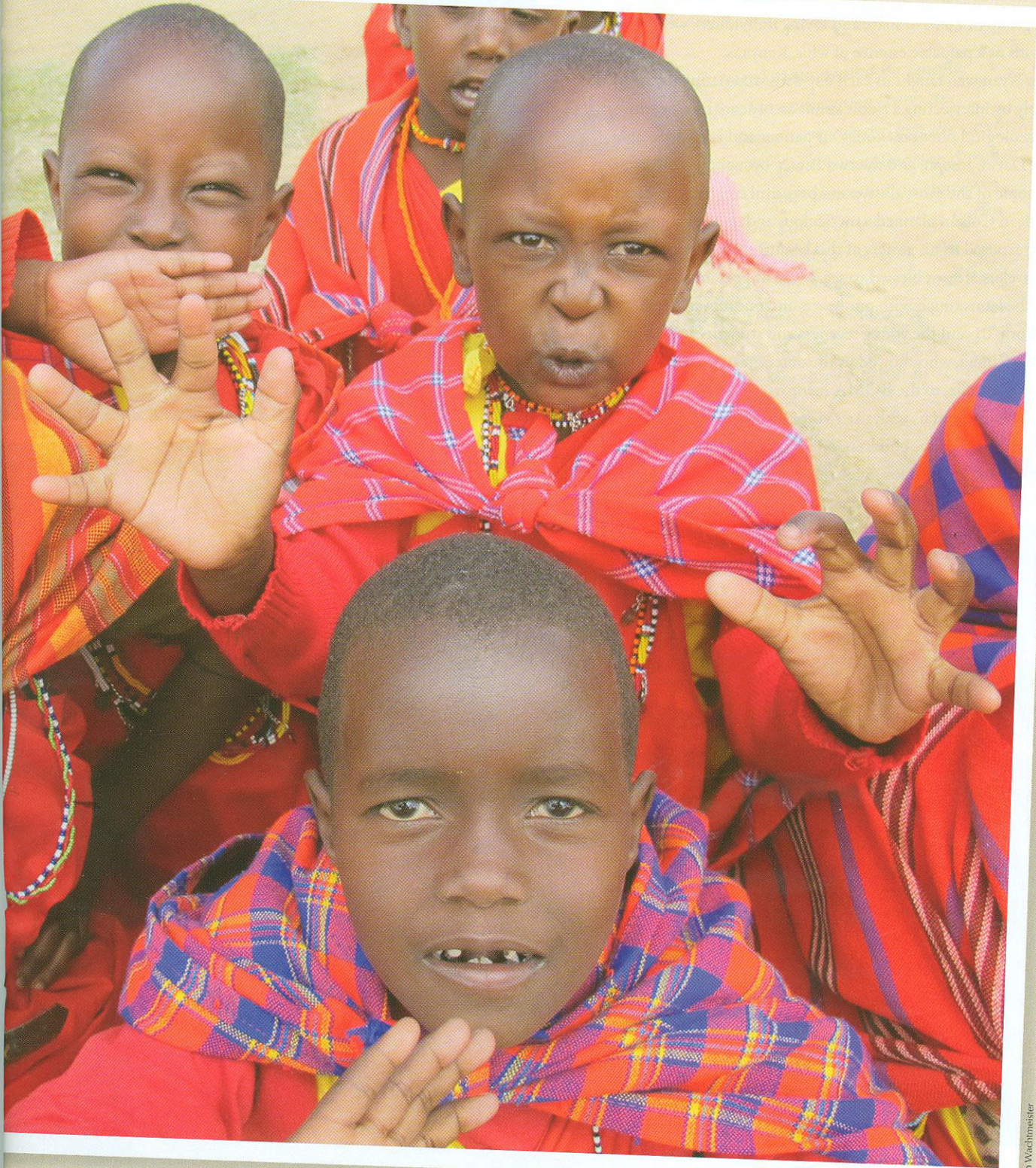
ment for our graduates." Watch for announcements of future destinations.

We asked the participants to keep journals and take lots of pictures, and then allow us to excerpt them here with only minimal editing. The following is but a scratch of the surface of the thousands of words and hundreds of photographs that we gratefully received.

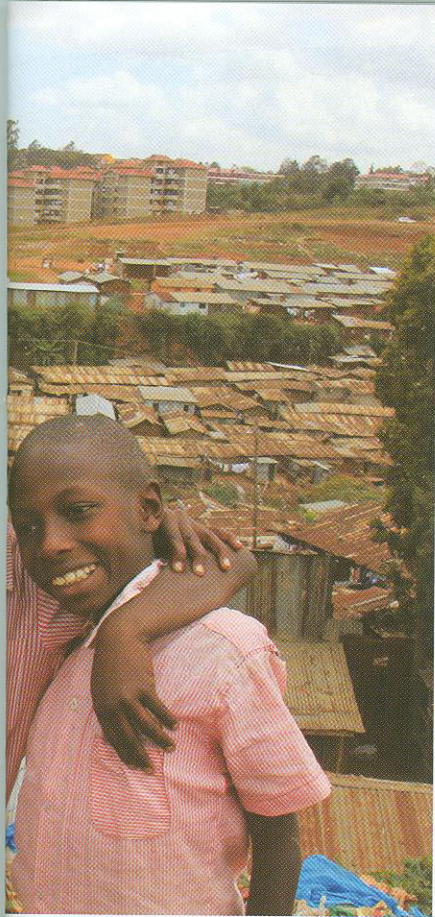


Mind

Children at the Enkiteng Lepa School



Karen Wachmeister



Joe Braz

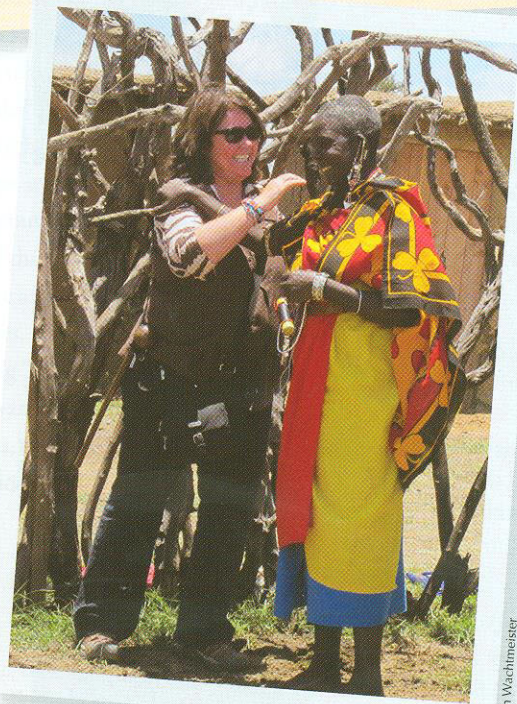
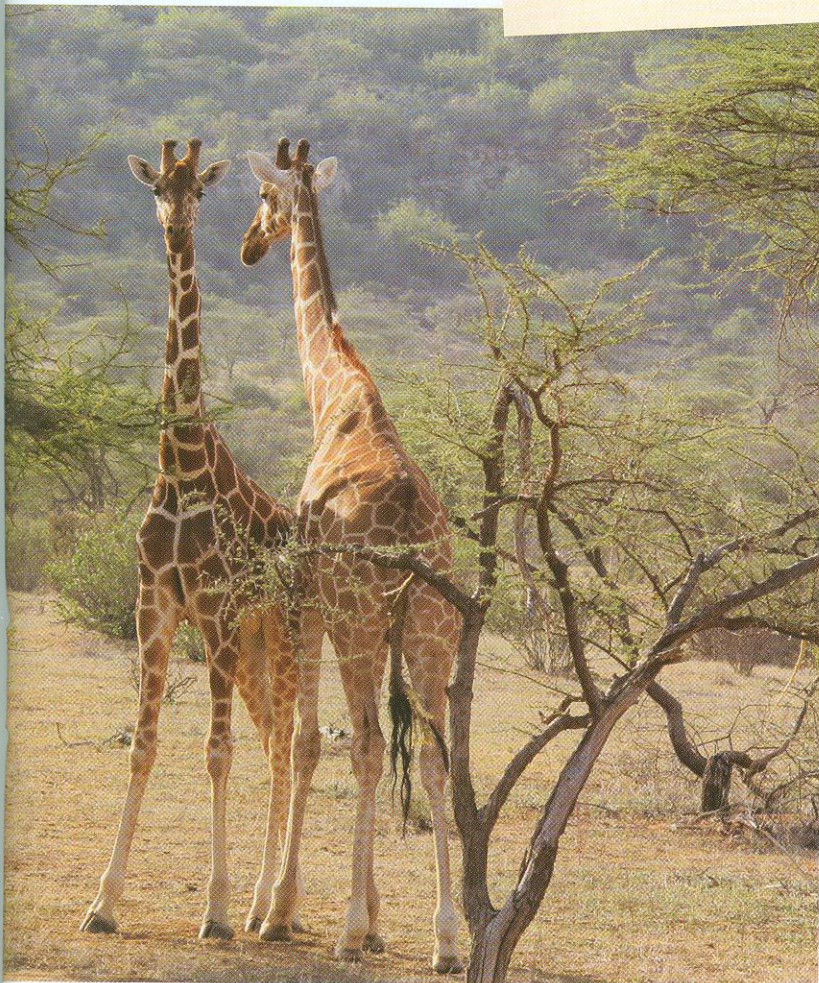
[In Nairobi] we pass a man herding a flock of sheep on a busy road. Women on the side of the road sell roasted corn, work alongside men doing road construction, and carry heavy burdens, balancing the loads on their backs with [tumplines] across their foreheads.

To know we are educating [students on our Kenya program] who will have had experience working with children with AIDS before they consider med school is uplifting.

Many areas grow vegetables and flowers, some owned by smaller Kenyan farmers and some by larger, foreign companies [such as DelMonte]. These products are flown to Europe, arriving fresh the next day. It made me wonder about the need for food in neighboring Somalia, and the starving images we see on TV. Does any wind up there?

Evening, Maasai Mara: I am sitting on the porch of my tent at the far end of camp, looking down a ravine listening to the sounds of the Serengeti. I can hear the bells of cows or goats being herded and the grunts and special whistles used by the shepherd to herd them. It is as if we have stepped back in time.

—Meredith Horton Braz '77



Karen Wachmeister

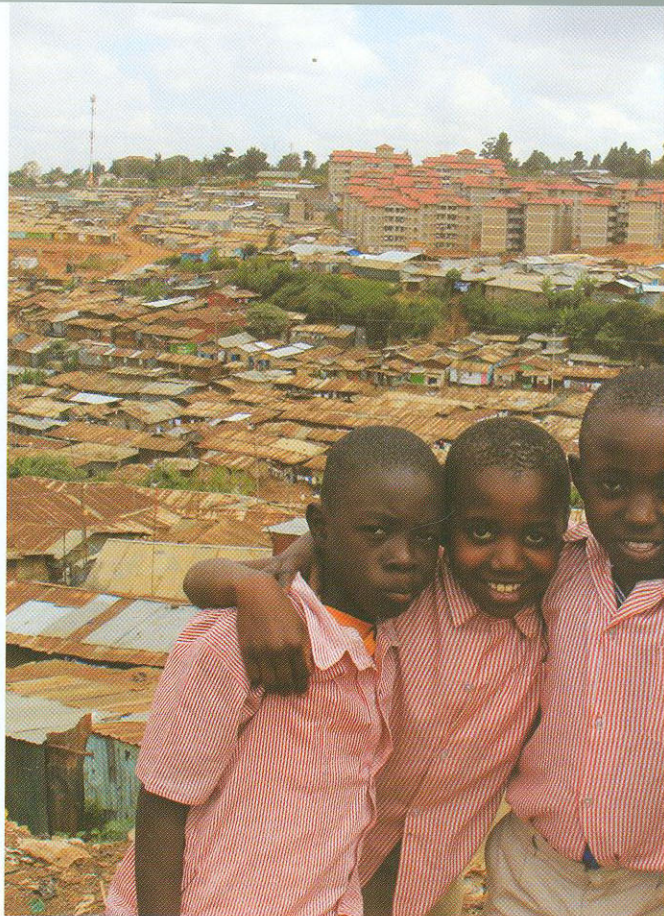
Inside a maasai boma, or livestock enclosure, Kathleen Perkins Colson '79 greets a villager. Colson operates The BOMA Project, explaining that "boma" also means "to fortify" and "a safe and protected place" and that she so named her fund because "it reflects the pastoralist-culture communities that we work with in northern Kenya [in] our commitment to an economic self-empowerment program run by local people."

When our daughter Samantha '09 forwarded us the email announcing the Laurentian journey to Kenya, we realized this was the perfect opportunity to experience a small part of the world she lived in for a semester four years earlier. After 14 memorable days with a special group of 20 passionate and loving individuals, we now carry with us a palpable essence of what Kenya is.

Celia Nyamweu taught us each day with stimulating lectures or simply by interjecting a tidbit about an obscure bird or confusing geological phenomenon. Our patient and knowledgeable drivers, David, Joseph, and the two Peters, brought us within feet of some of the most elusive and beautiful creatures on earth.

Kathleen Colson planned a meticulous and creative itinerary that exposed us to corners of this beautiful country that most travelers are not blessed to see. More important were the people she let us touch with our hearts and our minds. From Ken Okoth '01 and the young teachers and students at Red Rose School in Kibera, who showed us the outcome of dedication and power of the smile, to the BOMA mentors from northern Kenya, who inspired us with their vision, to the women of Um-oja in Samburu and the children in their school, who brought us to tears with their enthusiasm for learning, to the hardworking young women who operate the magical Maili Saba Camp overlooking the Menengai Crater, we were continuously humbled by what the human spirit, no matter how defeated, can accomplish.

—Julie Lovell P'09



Kibera students with their home neighborhood in the background.



Connie McBroem

With Ken Okoth '01, center, founder and head of the Kibera School, are, from left, Laurentian journey co-leader and Professor Emerita of Anthropology Celia Nyamweu; Trustee Sarah Johnson Redlich '82; Trustee Emerita Karen Wachtmeister; and co-leader Kathleen Perkins Colson '79.



Karen Wachtmeister

Checklist

A sample of the many species of flora and fauna observed:

Flora

Black tea
Candle bush
Coffee
"Fever tree"
Hibiscus
Kalanchoe
Morning glory
Periwinkle
"Toothbrush tree"
(aka Shepherd's tree)
Umbrella acacia
Whistling thorn tree
Yellow candle bush

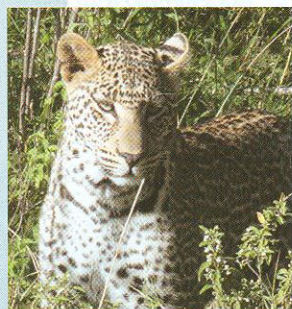
Fauna

African elephant
African lion
Agama lizard, *top right*
Baboon
Cape buffalo
Cheetah, *2nd right*
Crocodile
Dik dik
Eland
Gerenuk antelope
Grant's gazelle
Grevy's zebra
Impala
Jackal
Kudu
Leopard
Leopard tortoise
Oryx
Reticulated giraffe
Rhinoceros
Spotted hyena
Vervet monkey, *3rd right*

• • •
Bearded woodpecker
East African crowned crane, *bottom right*
Guinea fowl
Go-away bird
Ibis
Long-crested eagle
Maasai ostrich
Maribou stork
Palm nut vulture
Secretary bird



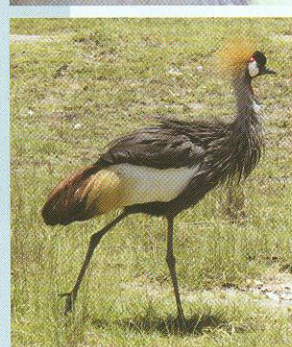
Joe Braz



Lennie McKinnon



Joe Braz



Karen Wachmeister

I came away from this trip with the realization that the women of Kenya have no basic human rights and with gratitude that I am a woman with choices. If I could return some day I would work to empower women and help to educate against female genital mutilation, the barbaric practice which is still in evidence today.

—Anne Moore '60

It is day 1 in Kenya and already I am beginning to realize the premium Kenyans place on getting an education for their children. I find our visits to three schools both eye-opening and inspiring.

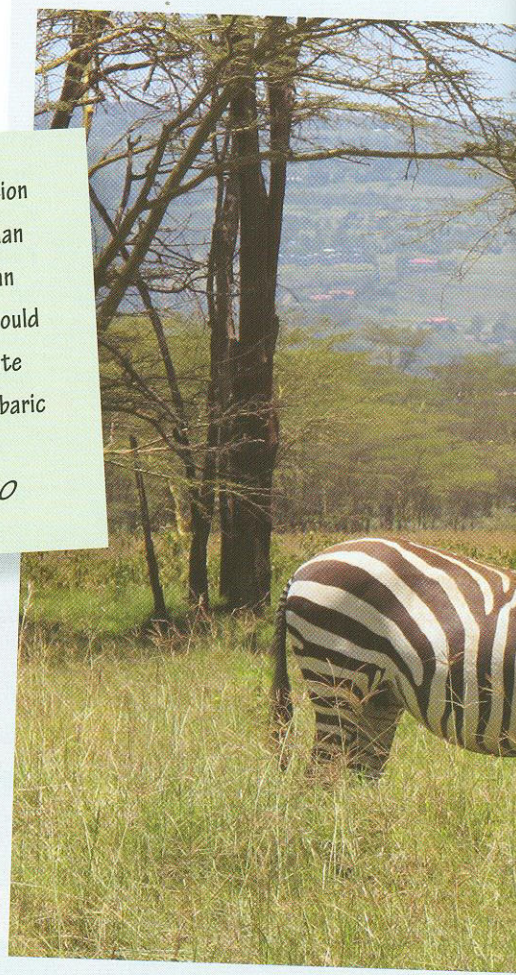
Ken Okoth '01 is the founder of the Children of Kibera Foundation that supports the Red Rose primary school (grades 1-6). The children are eager to tell us what they are learning. They come out into the school yard, surrounded by thick cement walls, and welcome us with a song and a rap-like dance, and their eyes shine. Then they take our hands and lead us out of the yard and down the street where we look out at miles of the corrugated tin roofs of the huts they call home.

We go on to another school at the all-woman's village of Omoja, a center for homeless women where young girls go to escape early marriage. Some of these women were widowed at age 15 and cannot remarry so they had no place to go. Here at the village, they are determined their children will know a different life from theirs and education will be that ticket to a better life.

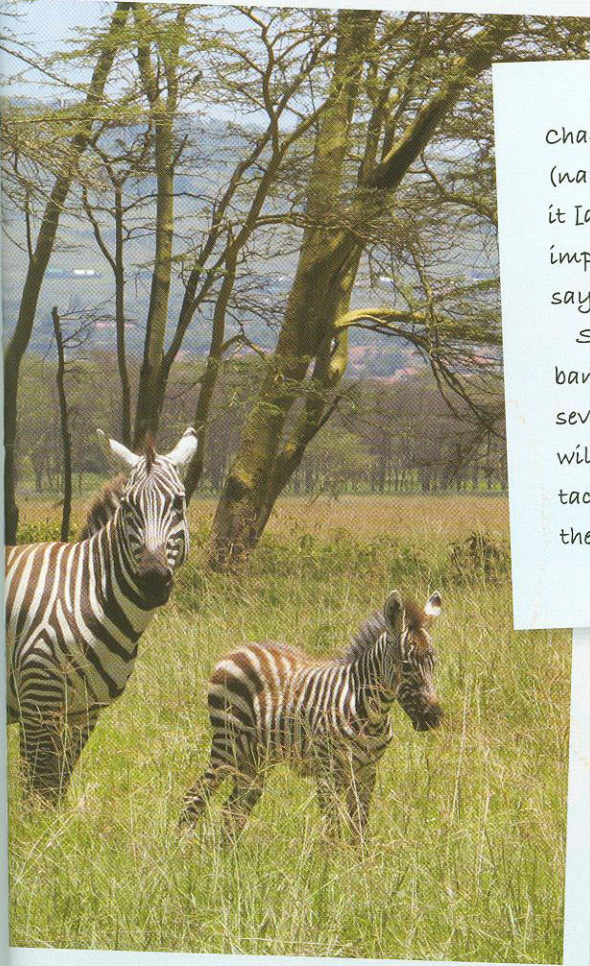
At Maji Moto (hot water) school in a Maasai village, the science corner [emphasizes] Kenya's conservation effort to teach the young people the value of protecting their animals rather than hunting them. Backpacks line the walls – three of them feature Dora the Explorer.

At all of the schools we leave books, pencils, pens, crayons, soccer balls. And at all of the places we leave a piece of ourselves with these joyous children who are the hope of Kenya's future.

—Ruth Carling Budlong '59



Karen Wachmeister



Chachu Ganya '96 and his 4-year-old son Zako Christopher (named after his SLU friend Christopher Bunting '93) came to visit [at the Kenya Semester base] – joined in the discussion about the impacts of [the Kenya Semester] on Kenya – very positive things to say about its impacts and the respect it has over Kenya.

Saw hippos on sand banks; crocs looking like logs on the river-bank; a cheetah, maybe pregnant; a lioness and three small cubs; several elephant families, one with a calf suckling; big herds of wildebeests; wildebeests and zebras crossing a river with quite spectacular jumping and splashing. Lennie McKinnon '58 struck up the alma mater, and a number of alums joined her.

—Celia Nyamweru

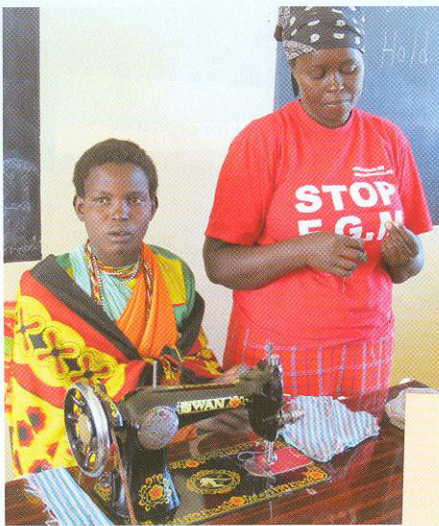
On our final day in the bush, a bit worrisome for our group was a very large elephant family coming right toward us. Someone asked the driver, “Do you think we should move?” The elephants calmly went around us on both sides. The best treat of all was a cheetah that walked directly in front of us.

We entered the courtyard of Enkiteng Lepa School, where the children were waiting to sing a song for us and dance delightfully in their red, blue and yellow outfits. A sign outside the school reads, “Don’t exchange girls for cows — give them education.” The leader is a brave woman. She was a teacher who was dismissed from numerous schools because of her stance on women’s issues. She is against female circumcision and rescues young girls from this fate and marriage to older men. This courageous woman was obviously very proud of what she had accomplished and said, “If they kill me I will die with dignity.”

Older women were there as well, who were widowed. They were learning to sew on old sewing machines, making things to sell, to support themselves. We all bought shirts, some reading “STOP FGM” (female genital mutilation).

We will remember the warm days, the cool nights, the gorgeous sunsets and sunrises, the magnificent vistas, the majestic animals healthy and thriving, the gentle, smiling faces, the scrumptious fresh food and all of you, my new friends.

—Joan Pellet McFarlane '55



Karen Wachtmeister

“(At) the Enkiteng Lepa School, widows were learning to sew on old sewing machines, making things to sell, to support themselves. We all bought shirts, some reading ‘STOP FGM’ (female genital mutilation).”

—Joan Pellet McFarlane '55

This trip has opened my eyes wider than ever to many beautiful people who work so hard making it day to day in this very complicated world in which we all exist.

[At] the SLU Study Center we met with students and directors of the Kenya Program. The students had just returned from a seven-day rural homestay in Tanzania. I loved hearing about the experiences they had enjoyed, from helping their host fathers plow a field to watching Mexican soap operas, dubbed in English, with their host mothers.

Early wake-up call (5:45) after hearing bush babies screaming on and off all night. They sound like a whole bunch of people being murdered.

—Karen Wachtmeister P'99, '05

Tons of monkeys around trying to steal food. A warrior's sole function was to use a sling-shot against them to keep them away. At first the idea of chasing away monkeys seemed to me to be a bit barbaric but quickly started to make sense when within minutes one particularly aggressive resident landed on a full plate of food as suddenly as an apple falls from a tree in October. They grab what they can as quickly as possible to avoid the sting of a rock.

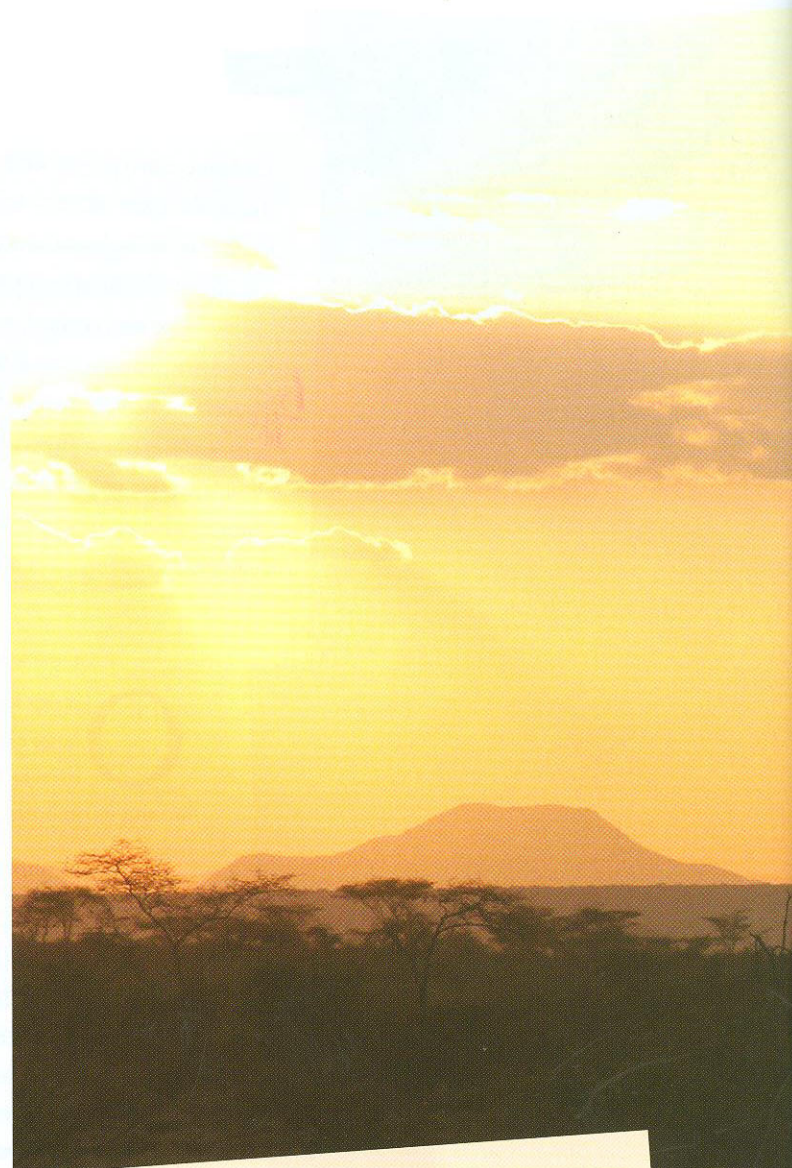
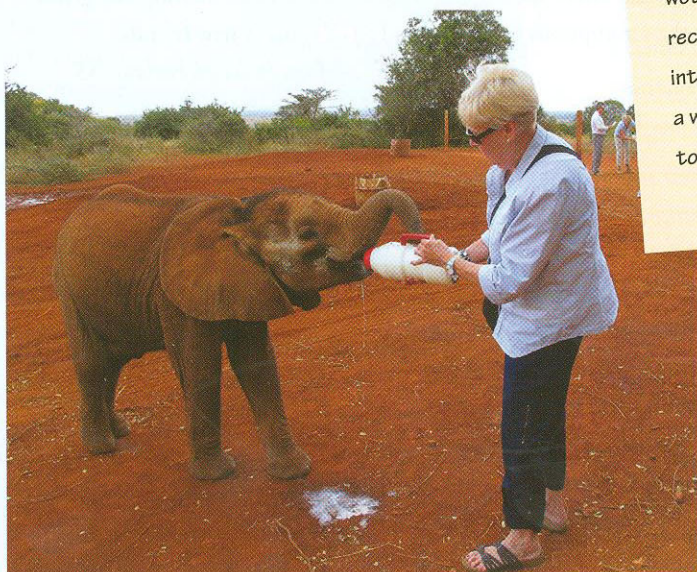
Stopped at Arbor Oils to meet with a woman chemist who has created a business supporting local people, which uses only African natural tree products to make creams, oils and soaps. They use resins from trees that make myrrh and frankincense and others. It is safe work that provides a livelihood, mostly to women, when no other opportunities would exist.

We had the privilege of seeing the wildebeest migration back to Tanzania. Soon we would see them stop for the night and graze until they started to move again in the morning. Unfortunately, not all of them would make it. Several older 'beests and some with injured legs close to the end of the line would be unable to make the full trip.

We left on a walking safari accompanied by six Maasai warriors. They effectively demonstrated how to start a fire using their traditional method (stick, hand-created friction, elephant dung broken up, followed by twigs).

Warriors carry only their colorful wrap, which acts as clothing and a blanket; open leather sandals; belt; and their spear and knife and sometimes a club. They are also carrying cell phones.

—Lauren McFarlane '84

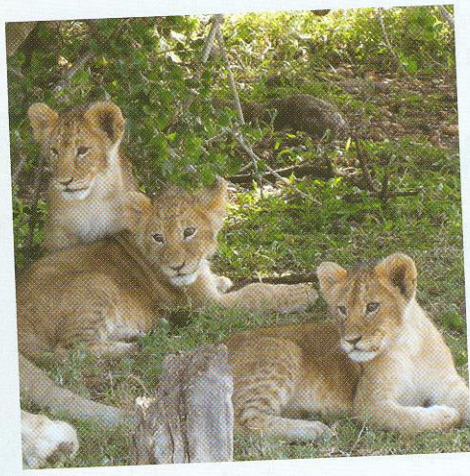
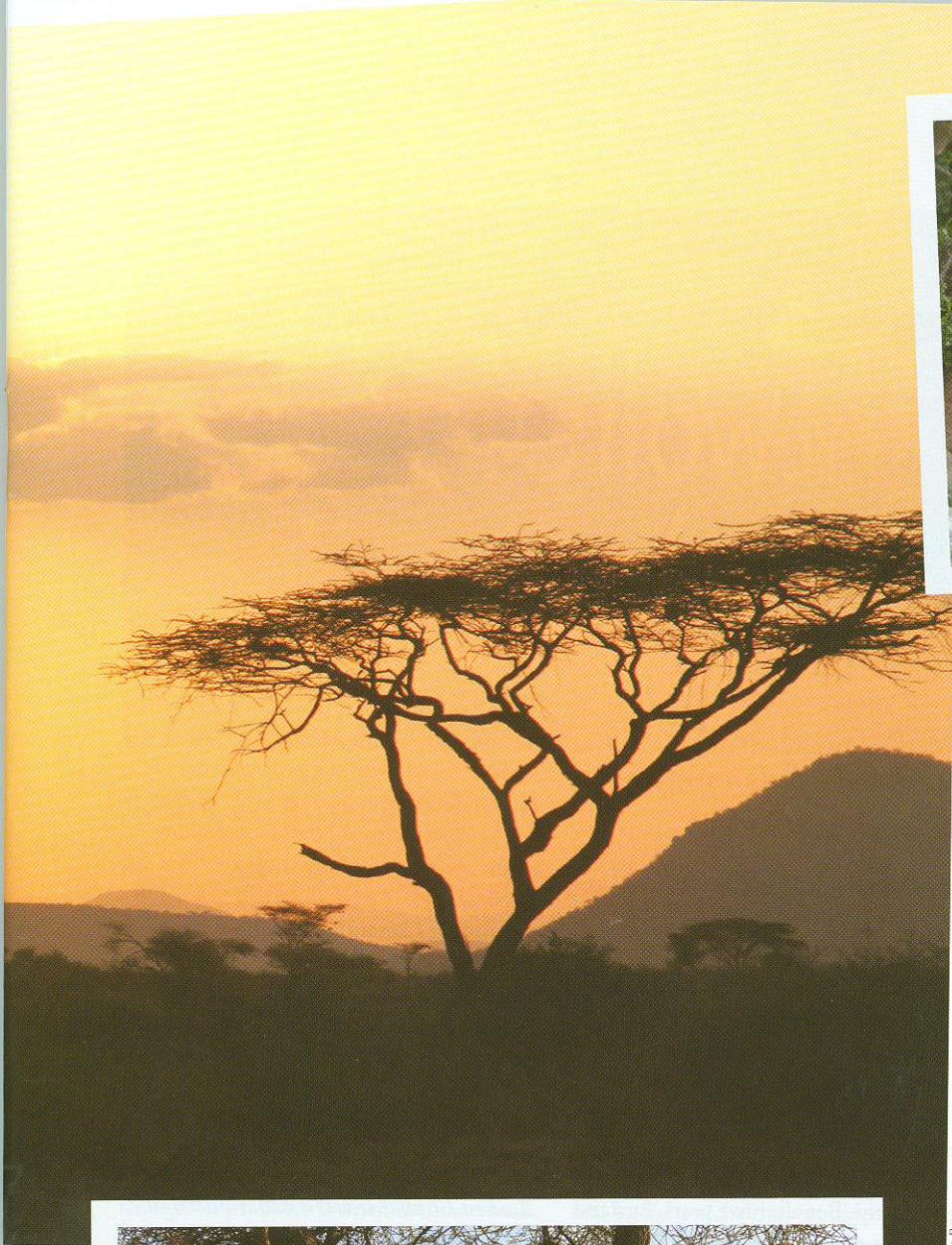


At the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, they care for orphaned baby elephants. They are frightened, traumatized from seeing their mothers killed by poachers, often suffering from wounds and malnutrition. They need their milk, which they receive every day from their handlers. The elephants are introduced slowly into the wild. If an orphan is accepted into a wild family it will know when it is time to go, often returning to see its human family or show a newborn baby.

—Joan Pellet McFarlane '55

Our final night in the Mara, at a campfire overlooking the Serengeti, we sang the alma mater. I could not have been prouder to be associated with SLU.

—Kathleen Perkins Colson '79



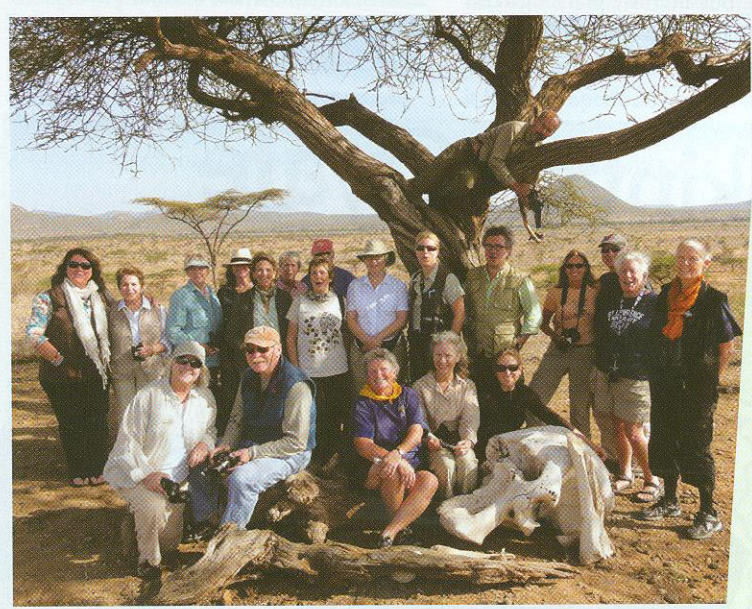
Lennie McKinnon

Nairobi is chaotic, with pedestrians everywhere, navigating street crossings with no self-regard. The city is old, dirty, polluted. Construction goes on everywhere but nothing seems completed. Young men work the streets amidst the traffic, hawking maps, toys, all sorts of trinkets, making eye contact, desperation in their eyes, trying to survive.

This trip touched us in ways unexpected. I miss the beautiful, welcoming smiles, the genuine love and concern the Kenyans showed. We could all learn a great deal about grace and dignity from these modest people.

—Joe Braz '76

Joe Braz



Courtesy of Lennie McKinnon

Most of the St. Lawrence group poses in the Samburu National Reserve.

Postscript

Although I have been home for a little more than a week, my thoughts are still there and on all the wonderful experiences I had, from driving on rutted roads to holding a little boy's hand overlooking his home in the slums of Kibera, to cocktails in an open field in the Mara while viewing the sunset on the last evening there. They all have a special place in my heart. What a wondrous diverse country!

—Joan Davis P'98