

Mauni School

our sister school in Malawi, Africa

Madelyn Schlansker was Chugach's nurse from 1991-2017.

The following is her story of how Chugach and Mauni came to be connected...

In July of 2004, I traveled to Malawi, Africa to the Malawi Children's Village (MCV) which is located near Mangochi, Malawi. This is a school/medical/nursery project specifically for children who have become orphans by the HIV/AIDS epidemic in this location. My plan was to volunteer at the health clinic. When I arrived, the health clinic was already staffed with 2 volunteer nurses, so I became a teacher at one of the schools.

Mauni School is a standard school for students in grades 1-8. There were about 500 male students at that time. The village had four classrooms for 140 + primary students per room on a dirt floor. The remaining students went to school outside under the baobab tree, rain or shine. The extended families of the Mauni students had been making bricks all summer. They made two at a time per day, with the one and only brick form in the village, in hopes that someone might help them build an addition to their school. When I returned to Chugach Optional that September I talked with the staff about the possibility of a sister school in Africa. We all agreed that this would be up to the students who were here at the time, and would need to be a student project, not a project generated by parent funds.

Discussions ensued. Because the villagers had shown interest by making a field full of mud bricks on their own, the Chugach students decided to embrace the idea and hence our relationship with Mauni School began.

2004-2006 Initially, the girls in the village did not go to school as there were no "bathroom" facilities near the school. The Chugach students decided to build a latrine. At the end of the year, enough funds had been raised for two 6-hole latrines to be built. The following year there were over 900 students going to school. The girls in the village were now attending.

The impact of the change the 2 latrines made for the children in "our" village was felt by everyone at Chugach Optional and thus the Mauni school project took on a life of its own. Art projects, Art Night, The Malawi Book sale and the "Kindy" bread sale – all with staff, student and family involvement have become tradition and the source of funds generated for Mauni School.

2007-2009 The students at Chugach Optional decided they would like to build more classrooms. A 4 block unit of classrooms, a storage room and a teacher office has been constructed. The supports are metal pipes and the roof is metal. Most structures in the village are supported by wood with straw roofs. Those structures are short lived as termites are destructive to wood and the constant rain, wind and sun deteriorate the straw roofs. Our school is built to last!

2010: We contracted with the cabinetry shop at MCV to build desks and benches for each of the classrooms. School books, paper and pencils were also purchased.

2011: We purchased 12 bicycles for teachers to use to travel the 3 miles each way to get to Mauni school. Prior to this, they walked rain or shine, not always making it to their destination.

2012: Uniforms were made for students through the sewing project at MCV. Now, everyone has something to wear to school. We purchased soccer balls and jump ropes.

2013-2014: We have built 2 teacher houses on our school property. Teachers now have a dedicated place to live. Because of the available housing, Mauni School no longer has difficulty securing teachers.

2014-2015: The students at Chugach Optional voted to provide funds for a Mauni School student to go to Gracious Secondary School located in the Malawi Children's Village. Secondary school is for grades 9-12 and must be paid for. Jaibu Saidi was chosen by the teachers at Mauni School to receive this scholarship. He has been a student at Mauni since kindergarten. We are also now needing repairs to the school. Funds were allotted.

2015-2016: The students at Chugach Optional voted to again fund Mauni Students to attend Gracious Secondary School. This year 4 students: Marko Kazembe, Chavi Piasi, Janatu Bonomali, and Maida Kananji were selected by Boniface, the Headmaster at Mauni. Bicycles were purchased for each student along with school supplies. Additional latrines, school learning materials and sports equipment were purchased. In June a fierce wind storm blew a section of the roof off. Monies were designated for repair.

2016-2017: A Chugach kindergarten wanted to know why we were only sending boys to secondary school. So Chugach students choose to support 5 female students to go to Gracious Secondary School: Steria Limabni, Magret Salimu, Emily Ackleni, Magret Mangaka and Dija Elliot. Needed school supplies and teacher furniture were purchased.

I returned to MCV in Malawi in 2007 and again in 2010. The changes in our village are beyond what anyone could have ever imagined. Children are going to school and some have advanced to Form School (grades 9-12). Opportunities exist. Orphans are strong. There is a sense of pride in everything that is happening. The commitment from Chugach Optional has changed the lives of a village. It is awesome.

When Madelyn retired, she asked if I would be interested in supporting our connection. I was honored to be able to continue helping our Chugach students be global citizens.

2017-2018: Chugach chose to support work being done for the 10-year old school. The students wanted to make sure that the building would last. The school needed portable boards, sports equipment, school supplies and bicycles. Since Malawi updated their

educational curriculum, Gracious Secondary School needed new text books and lab equipment which the students agreed to support.

2018-2019: Chugach chose to support Mauni with school needs including text books, urinal fence, cement and lime, uniforms and desks. The students also learned that Malawi Children's Village had kept an unused funds balance in our Mauni account throughout the past years. The students decided to use the current and unused funds to send 5 more students to Gracious Secondary School.

2019-2020: Chugach was able to sell Kindy bread and have Art Night. Due to the pandemic, we were not able to meet and talk about how we wanted to support Mauni. It was decided to give the money to Mauni as support through the pandemic.

2020-2021: Since we could not gather due to the pandemic, individuals sent funds through Malawi Children's Village to Mauni.

2021-2022: We were excited to be able to have our Kindy Bread sales and Art Night restored after the pandemic. Mauni staff was grateful for the support, especially for desks and writing supplies. Many students are from ultra poor families who are not able to buy school supplies therefore the students drop-out of school. Students were motivated by the new desks. More students attended school because it is easier to stand and answer questions from desks than the floor.

2022-2023: In March, Tropical Cyclone Freddy hit Malawi and, while thankfully no lives were lost around Mauni, damage was done. Instead of raising funds for teacher housing, Mauni shared that they needed support in structural damage to the buildings as well as water damage to supplies, desks and chairs. Mauni was very grateful for our support.

2023-2024: In January, 2024, Mauni reached out to Chugach asking for support. Due to Cyclone Freddy, the topsoil of their growing fields were destroyed. They were not able to grow their crops. Students were not coming to school because they were hungry. Mauni asked for a 40lb bag of flour for each of their 900 students. Chugach students decided to take money from Mauni 'savings' over the past 20 years to support this need. The funds from Kindy Bread and Art Night were able to purchase teaching and learning materials as well as maintenance to the classrooms and latrines.

Thoughts from a former Chugach student, Abi Howe...

Chugach has supported Mauni students through the small things like creating a piece of art for Art Night, buying a piece of Kindy Bread or a book during our used book sale. Just those three events have gotten Mauni students so much help. We have added classrooms for the school, bathrooms so girls could start going to school, and we've paid for older students to go to secondary school. When I think of our choice to support Mauni students and teachers, I feel that we are changing lives. I feel that not only are we

affecting lives in Malawi, we are affecting our own lives. When helping others, we are helping to make the world a better place.

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For pictures and more information, please visit our Mauni website.

www.chugachsisterschool.org

For more information about Malawi Children's Village, please visit their website.

<http://malawichildrensvillage.org/>