



SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER

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Forks Up *Recap*

How did the event go?

How much was raised?

These are the questions we most often hear. Here are a few reflections from our March 21st event.

Seventeen days before the event, we pondered whether to cancel. We had fewer than 50 people signed-up to attend. Dorcas Wachira, our director in Kenya, would have told us to have more faith in our supporters.

On Friday, the day before the event, 149 people had committed to attending. On Saturday evening, when guests filled The Red Shed, 151 people were in attendance! With the combination of guests, cook-off, and the silent auction tables, we learned that 151 may be our maximum for the event in the new space. (Keep this in mind for next year!)

We switched up the cooking competition food categories this year. For more than a decade, our two enduring cook-off challenges were "Mac & Cheese" and "Meatballs." This year, "Mac & Cheese" was replaced with "Your favorite Side," which meant pretty much anything. Fresh homemade rolls, appetizers, salads, and desserts filled the array of entries.

The new venue struck a chord with most everyone. The festive atmosphere of The Red Shed, often used for weddings and receptions, is an ideal place to celebrate the good work of Kenya Matters and our partner in Kenya, the CRCA (Community Recovery Centre, Africa).

SOME OF THE THINGS WE CELEBRATED:

- 41 new faces were first-timers to the Forks Up event!
- Surpassing our financial goal of \$15,100 by more than \$2000
- Our 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place cook-off winners...drum roll, please...
 - Meatballs - Dave Ritsema, Field Reichert, Chana VanderVennen
 - Favorite Side - Whitney Lubbers, Olivia Peitrowski, Micki Buist
- A brilliant sunset for those who stayed for our post-event party
- A masterfully created video by Seth Thompson, photographer and videographer, who visited this past December. It skillfully and artfully captured the essence of the children's home and the good work that continues.

For those not in attendance, please take four minutes to be moved by the goodness of this short film!

SCAN THE QR CODE



Thanks to The Red Shed for the generous donation of their venue and staff support!

SCAN THE QR CODE





Leaky Roof *Replaced!*

The first building on the property of the children's home prior to January 2007 was a rental unit. It had been on the property prior to Elijah and Dorcas Wachira building their home next door. It was already aging 20 years ago.

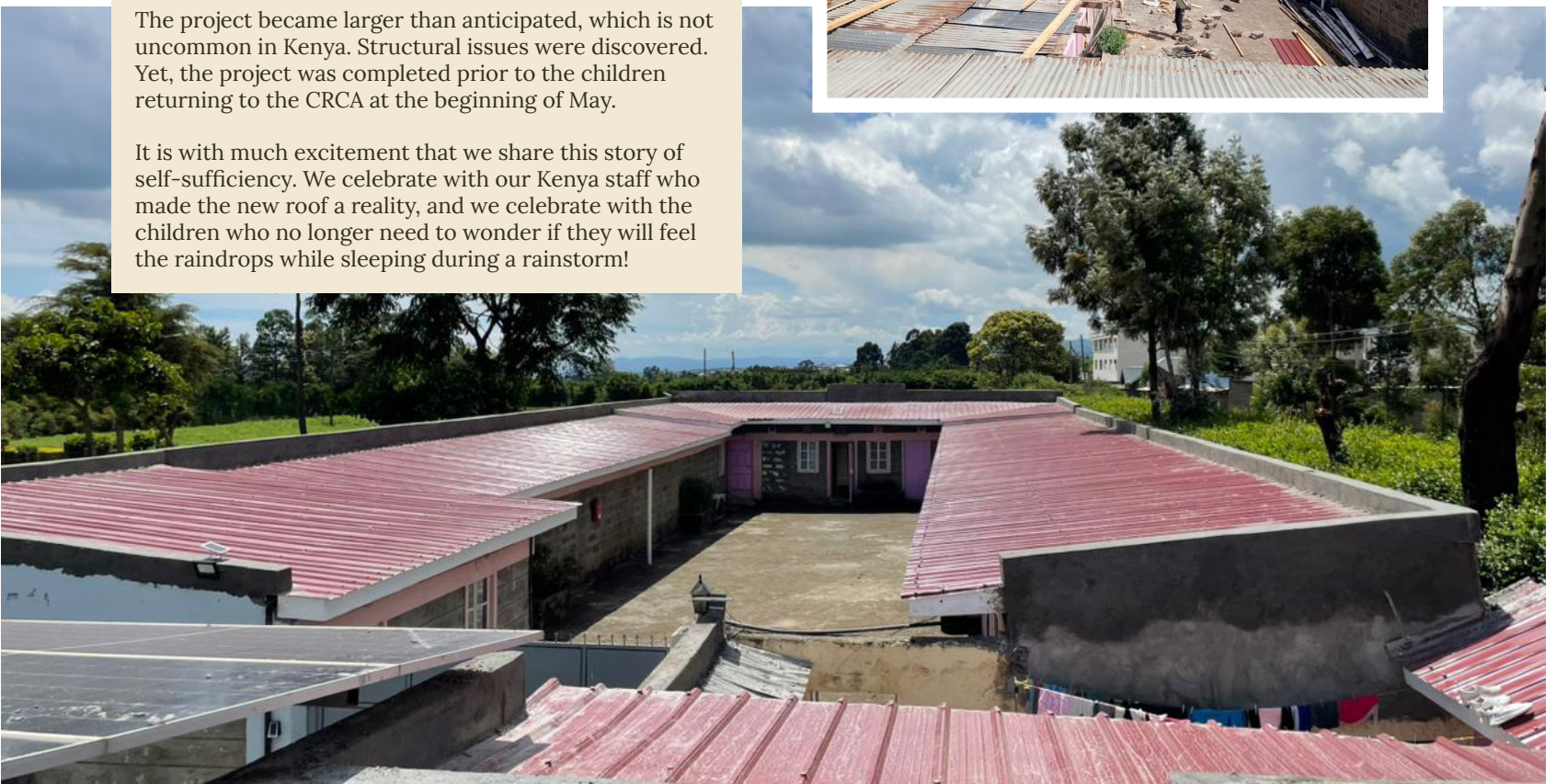
At the end of 2025, our director in Kenya, Dorcas Wachira, suggested that a new roof was needed for the children's bedrooms. When the rains became heavy, the roof would leak inside the rooms and create a mess on the bedding and belongings.

Dorcus did not ask for funds. She hoped that the community, primarily the extended Wachira family spread throughout Kenya, would collectively raise the funding necessary for the roof replacement.

With funds raised, the project began in mid-April. The children are out of school in mid-April and they leave the safehouse to visit their surviving relatives. So, it was determined that the school holiday break would be an appropriate time to complete the project.

The project became larger than anticipated, which is not uncommon in Kenya. Structural issues were discovered. Yet, the project was completed prior to the children returning to the CRCA at the beginning of May.

It is with much excitement that we share this story of self-sufficiency. We celebrate with our Kenya staff who made the new roof a reality, and we celebrate with the children who no longer need to wonder if they will feel the raindrops while sleeping during a rainstorm!





DECEMBER 2026

By Randy Buist, *Kenya Matters Board President*

With the solar project complete, Kenya Matters was poised to raise funds at the end of 2025 and into 2026 to improve the well and water delivery system. That timeline was unexpectedly expedited during our December visit to the children's home (CRCA).

On Thursday of our visiting week, Ben Wachira approached me in the morning to say, "The pump is not working well. We don't know what is wrong. We have a technician coming this afternoon. Hopefully, it is only the control panel." By the end of the day, the tech had determined the panel was not the issue.

Five neighboring homes and gardens are dependent on the CRCA borehole's water (for which they pay). Additionally, water is sold every day to people who make a living delivering water to local homes. The CRCA water infrastructure is critical to the entire community.

By Friday morning, December 5, the pump had slowed even more, pumping barely enough water for the CRCA's use, without even watering the young transplants in the garden. Collectively, with staff members Ben and Tobias, leaders from the borehole company that services the well, and input from our solar representative, we decided to pull up the 12-year-old pump and pipes from 200+ meters.

On Monday, December 8, the piping and pump were lifted out of the Rift Valley earth. The pump was tested on Tuesday. It was failing, still working, but with poor flow.





A larger pump would hopefully allow all necessary water to be pumped during daylight hours. The failing pump sometimes ran up to 20 hrs each day. Thus, it required the use of the solar batteries and sometimes a connection to Kenyan Power. We hoped that the larger pump could run solely on solar power once we had more storage capacity.

By Wednesday, December 10, with the braintrust of our CRCA staff, and knowing their neighbors and their crops were cut off from water, we decided that we really had no choice but to upgrade the pump and infrastructure, minus the leaky tanks. (They will be a future project.)

This entire project, including an upgraded control panel (the most expensive of the components of the project), was estimated at \$8,500 U.S.

Friday, December 11, was a holiday in Kenya, their Independence Day. The entire county comes to a standstill: parties, fireworks, and lots of food everywhere. Yet, in spite of the holiday, the water company arrived early on Friday morning with a large crew of six men. Our staff members, along with a handful of the older boys, helped wherever possible.

Long after dark on Friday night, with the new power line replaced from the borehole to the power box (approx 200 meters of buried cable), the new pump and motor submersed, the new and larger water line installed from the bottom of the well to the surface, and the new controller installed, the crew quit for the day.

Their entire Independence Day was spent working, apart from their families and the parties. They said they would return on Saturday to turn on the power & test the system.

I boarded the flight from Amsterdam to Detroit at 10 a.m. on December 13, not yet having heard if the system was working. Fingers were crossed. A few hours into my flight, with in-flight wifi working, I received a message from Ben Wachira, "The pump IS working, more than doubling the output of the previous pump!"

During our visit, we heard and saw so much goodness. It was a validation of our efforts to provide support to the project! And now, they are enjoying the goodness of a larger well pump because of you and your generous financial support.

