

Rafiki Pen Pals Program

Community Classrooms Collaborative

Email admin@community-classrooms.org

Web www.community-classrooms.org



Dear Pen Pal and family,

Welcome to the Rafiki Pen Pals Program. Rafiki is a Swahili word that means friend. If you have seen 'The Lion King' then think of the baboon, his name is Rafiki and he is Simba's friend. Simba means lion in Swahili, the main language of Kenya and several other East African countries. The Rafiki Pen Pals Program offers a unique learning experience that creates positive change in village communities. Families write letters to their Pen Pal (siblings may have one each). Seasonally, approximately four times a year, the letters will be collected and mailed or personally delivered to the village in Kenya.

As part of this program you have the opportunity to make a new Rafiki friend from a rural village in Kenya. You will write letters, draw pictures and send photographs to each other. There are some simple rules to follow so please read the 'Guidelines' document before you begin. Writing letters is an ancient art with many benefits. You will form friendships that can last a lifetime, develop cultural understanding of people from a very different place, practice your writing and reading skills and learn many new things about the world that can help you become truly global citizens.



An additional benefit of this program is that all funds raised go directly towards empowering people out of poverty in a sustainable, environmentally conscious way. Through your sponsorship, Kenyan children on the program will be provided with books, pencils, writing paper and other learning materials, luxuries that most families would not be able to afford. Additional funds are invested into sustainable systems and resources such as heirloom seeds, rainwater tanks, composting toilets and integrated livestock (cows, goats, sheep, chickens, fish), to enhance the community's quality of life. We also support and facilitate educational programs in permaculture, health and wellbeing.

We have lots to give and lots to learn – that is the key for Community Classrooms, based on mutual exchange. Please fill out the sponsorship form with the amount you can contribute and contact us if you would like to know more about the organisation or volunteering opportunities.



Asante sana! (Thank you so much!)

Samantha Willcocks, the Community Classrooms team and Nyangidi village, Kenya xx

Guidelines

English is most likely the third language that your Pen Pal speaks. They first learn their tribal mother-tongue (which for this village is DhoLuo), then they learn Swahili (the main language in East Africa), and then they learn English. So please forgive your Pen Pal if their spelling or grammar is still developing. Hopefully they will learn lots through the process of reading your letters and writing back.

Compared to Australians, the people in rural Kenya are extremely financially poor. It is important not to promise gifts of money, as handouts can be detrimental to empowering people out of poverty. It is much better to fund initiatives such as training in organic agriculture and co-create a permaculture garden. Give a man a fish, he can eat for a day but give him knowledge and tools and he can feed his family for a lifetime. Please let us know if your Pen Pal is asking for money or if you would like to support them in a specific way.

It can be hard to keep letters in good condition amidst the dust and rain of mud-hut village living so it helps if the letters and photographs that you send are durable. Try not to use fountain-pen ink or felt pen for writing as this runs very easily and they will no longer be able to read your letter. Pencil is ok but does fade with time. For writing, biro is probably best.

Frequently Asked Questions

When and where do I send my letter to?

Please wait for us to match you with your Rafiki Pen Pal before sending your letter. We will send you a reminder with our postal address each time a new round of letter writing begins.

What should we write about?

You can write about anything you like. Where you live, who you live with. What you enjoy doing for fun. All about your school (or if you are homeschooled this is nice for you Pen Pal to learn about too). You can talk about your favourite foods, colours, places, people. You can send photographs and draw pictures. Remember to ask questions too.



Why can't we directly send letters to our Pen Pal?

Firstly, the Kenyan Pen Pals live mostly in mud huts and do not have an 'address', 'letterbox' or 'postman'. Yet, everyone generally knows everyone else and through a local teacher, your letters will find their way to the right people. Secondly, we must protect the privacy and safety of children on the program.

Please visit our website to learn more about the program and connect with other Rafiki Pen Pals: www.community-classrooms.org

Making your contribution

You can pay your preferred contribution via your bank using Direct Deposit. Paying by Direct Deposit prevents other financial service providers from deducting credit card fees and other service fees from your donation. You can choose to pay this upfront (\$52 a year) or on a regular basis (\$7 a week or \$30 a month).

Our bank details

Bank name:	Bank of Queensland
Account name:	Community Classroom Collaborative
BSB:	124 156
Account number:	2220 4515
Reference:	Your child's name (e.g. "Jane Smith" would be "JSmith")

The program is not intended to become a financial strain on parents. Children are encouraged and supported (resources are in the development pipeline) to practice activism and social responsibility – using their passions and skills to fundraise their contribution and change the lives of others. Some families like to donate more than the recommended contribution. If you are thinking about doing this or would like to please contact us for more information.

Fundraising

The main goal of this program is cultural exchange and learning. The positive change that arises through the funds generated is also of course wonderful and drives us to continue this cause, improving the system of exchange and perhaps one day expanding the program to other villages. Of course we need to cover things like postage and writing supplies so the children in Kenya can actually write back. This gives them a huge boost of confidence and opportunity to improve their reading and writing skills too.

Everyone involved in making the Pen Pal program happen is a volunteer. The money that is raised goes directly to the costs of printing letters, photographs and postage. We buy paper, stationary and learning resources for the Kenyan children and any additional funding is invested into participatory community projects such as permaculture education programs and rainwater tanks.

However, the Pen Pal program is definitely not intended to become a financial strain on parents. The children are encouraged and supported to practice activism and social responsibility - using their passions and skills to change the lives of others. One child on the program likes music and recently went busking for his Kenyan friend. With a sign and the Pen Pal photo displayed at the markets he raised \$100 in an hour! He was so proud when he came to tell us. Other children like to bake and have a muffin drive in their neighbourhood. Some kids like to have a 'movie night' and sell popcorn and other treats to their friends. If gardening is their thing then selling seedlings is an option. Budding authors might like to write an article to their local paper or school. There are many ways the children can be involved in fundraising and it is a good opportunity for learning, creativity and empowerment.

The \$7/week donation is only a suggested contribution amount. This is for those families who said they have been wanting to sponsor a child or charity but didn't know which one to choose. They like that Community Classrooms is very small and intimately connected to the village in Kenya. People can see very clearly where their money has gone.

The suggested minimum of \$52/year covers postage, printing and basic educational resources for the village children. This can be given at any time after the funds have been raised. You are certainly not locked in to a weekly sponsorship when that doesn't fit you and your family.

Rafiki Pen Pals Application Form

Your sponsorship makes a huge difference to the life of a child and their community. Because most families on the Rafiki Pen Pal Program survive on the equivalent of \$1 a day we are asking Australian Sponsors to contribute this \$1 a day to the program (but feel free to give more!), to provide learning opportunities for your own child and family, resources for your Pen Pal child and enhance quality of life for their whole village community and environment.

So that's just:

- \$7 a week or
- \$364 a year

For families that feel they cannot contribute this amount but would still like to connect with their Kenyan Rafiki Pen Pal we ask for a minimum of \$1 a week, that's \$52 per year to cover the costs of postage, paper, printing photographs and supplying learning materials for your Pen Pal Child.

We pride ourselves on being a not-for-profit organization that is 100% reliable and transparent with the way we use funding to empower and support your Pen Pals and the wider village community. We can also provide you with pictures, brochures and fundraising inspiration.

Please complete and return

Name(s) of parent(s):

Name(s) of child(ren):

Age(s) of child(ren):

Postal address:

Contact phone number:

Email:

Contribution:

\$7/week

\$1/week

Other amount:

Please set up a regular direct deposit or pay for the year in advance and let us know at admin@community-classrooms.org