Inspiring a generation

6th MWEA Classic Marathon

MWEA Classic Marathon

2014
#INSPIREAGENERATION

way away from Mwea

Guarantee a student’s participation in the Mwea Classic Marathon by buying a T-shirt for only kshs 1,000

PAYBILL NO: 917970

» By donating any amount, you will sponsor the event in your own way and take part in Inspiring a generation

» By registering and paying online in our website, www.mweaclassicmarathon.co.ke you will participate in the marathon as well as pay for your T-shirt.
EDITORIAL

The Mwea Classic Marathon seeks to create awareness that connects education and economic empowerment to sports. The marathon has improved the level of education in Kirinyaga and has encouraged the youth to participate in more productive activities and shun illicit brew and criminal activities, and above all helping them identify their role models and helping them choose their careers. Mwea Classic Marathon is intended to show case the beautiful paddy carpets that define Mwea.

The 6th edition of Mwea Classic Marathon will be on 6th September 2014 at the traditional venue; Mwea boys secondary school. If you thought that running is only for the young, then you thought wrong, meet a 60 year old ‘young athlete’ who is a good example of the saying that age is just a number. For many individuals who participate in sports, they do so for the money, but for the Urban Swaras club, they run for passion, for physical fitness and to give back to the society through charity.

And while at it, get to learn what the technical manager of the MCM does to make it a success. We also get a word from the assistant games master, Mwea Boys Secondary School, where the event takes place among many other feature stories. Run a marathon and let’s empower the leaders of tomorrow; the youth.

Yours truly

MCM team 2014

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It gives me much pleasure to make a recollection of the success of Mwea Classic Marathon (MCM). MCM is a community-based marathon in Mwea East and Mwea West Districts in Kirinyaga County that draws participants from Corporates, groups and Individuals from across the country. Last year, we marked the fifth edition of the Marathon on the Saturday, 7th of September 2014 at the traditional venue, Mwea Secondary School.

MCM has become an integral part of the community in Mwea and the entire Kirinyaga County, owing to the role we play in enriching lives of the young people. Through the kind support of our esteemed partners, the Marathon has continued to grow in leaps and bounds to achieve the objectives of enriching education and supporting the youth in Kirinyaga County.

In the recent years the Mwea classic marathon has created awareness that connects education and economic empowerment to sports. The marathon has continued to focus on improvement to education in the area and has encouraged the youth to participate in more productive activities and shun illicit brew and criminal activities, and above all, helping them identify positive role models for their careers.

The MCM has two primary objectives:

a) To uplift education standards of children in Mwea and Kirinyaga County;
b) To inspire the youth to participate in more productive activities and shun illicit brew and criminal activities.

One of the most remarkable sub-activities of MCM of which I draw great pleasure is the Schools mentorship program, which runs throughout the year. This program entails local professionals, local university students and professional motivational speakers visiting schools and talking to the students on various matters relating to their studies. This section of the marathon is run separately from the marathon, although it is funded from the marathon kitty.

The funds raised though the marathon are utilized in running the marathon, donating learning material to schools and funding the schools mentorship program as follows:

1. The Schools’ Learning Material
   a) Each Secondary School gets KShs 100,000 in book vouchers.
   b) We send a number of students from each school to the annual leadership camp held at Graceland’s Girls Secondary School in Kiganjo, Nyeri. Those students who perform well at the leadership camp get a chance to attend an international youth leadership forum in the USA.

2. The Mentorship Program
   Running a schools mentorship program throughout the year.

3. The Marathon
   We organize the marathon logistics, which include race licenses with KAAF, publicity, fundraising, security among others as well as give prizes to winners of the three races, full marathon (42Kms), half marathon (21kms) and 10km. Local youths and runners from the local secondary schools are given special prizes.

Continued on page 6
Youth

As I mentioned earlier, in addition to improving the education standards of pupils in the Mwea, the second primary objective of the marathon is to encourage the youth to participate in more productive activities and shun illicit brew and criminal activities. The marathon therefore encourages youth from the various Mwea sub-locations to participate in the marathon and to continue running through the formation of running clubs.

Local youths and runners from the local secondary schools are given special prizes.

There are prizes for winners of the special local youth category of runners. In addition the marathon has sponsored promising youth from Mwea to take part in running events held in other parts of the country.

The local members of the organising committee have also done a great deal to encourage owners of the liquor breweries to take up other businesses and shun brewing of killer drinks. We would be quite happy to share examples of our success in this area with you.

We take pride that through a small way, we contribute to our country's Vision 2030. As you come to celebrate the beautiful flora and fauna of Mwea through the scenic marathon view of the overstretched rice paddies and the natural scent of the pishori rice, it will enrich you more to know that our run is for a cause.

Together we can inspire a generation.
WORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

We enter 2014 with anticipation of an even bigger and better Marathon. A big source of inspiration is the high with which, we accomplished the 5th Mwea Classic Marathon and I know from having met the team this will be going on again this year.

Let me start with a big thanks to our sponsors who have stood by us and strengthened our vision to improve the education standards in Mwea and indeed Kirinyaga. We are forever indebted to you as we look forward to your support this year. The passionate organizing committees from Mwea and Nairobi played a perfect role to deliver a great marathon success and I must add that we could not have done this without you.

As we embark on the 6th Mwea Classic Marathon and we recognise the support of the Kirinyaga County Government and look forward to forging a closer working relationship with our governor Hon. Ndathi towards the success of the event.

We have been blessed with another opportunity to give back to society in the best way we know how by running for a reason as we smell the rice. I look forward to seeing you all at the 6th Mwea Classic Marathon 2014 in Mwea.

Mr. Charles Gichobi
Mwea Classic Marathon Chairman

Mwea Classic Marathon Guests of Honor

2009
Mr. Jimmy Kibaki
Businessman

2010
Hon. Kalonzo Musyoka
Former Vice President, Republic of Kenya

2011
H.E. Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta CGH
President, Republic of Kenya
and Commander in Chief of Kenya Defence Forces.

2012
Mr. Francis Kimemia
Secretary to the cabinet and Chairman of The National Security Advisory Committee (NSAC)

2013
Rev. Magdalene Nduta
CEC Member, Gender, Culture, Social Services, Children, Youth and Sports, Kirinyaga County
MARATHON PACKAGES

THE HALF MARATHON (21KM) RACE
The half marathon (21km) race starts at the sports field outside Mwea school, straight to Mwea hospital and to Karira primary school then turning right and running in the rice pads past Mwea stores to the far end bridge then turning left again into the rice pads running for approximately 8 kilometres on the dirt road within the rice scheme and joining the Embu highway at Thiba North, then making a loop and running on the tarmac road into Mwea Town to the finish at Mwea School.

THE 10KM RACE
The 10 km race starts at a point on Mwea secondary school field straight past Mwea hospital and to Karira primary school then turning left into the rice pads at the Karira junction and running for approximately 5 kilometres on the dirt road within the rice scheme and joining the Embu highway just before the rice pads final bridge, then making a loop and running on the tarmac road into Mwea Town to the finish at Mwea school.

THE 5 KM RACE (FAMILY RUN)
The 5 km race starts at a point on Mwea secondary school field straight past Mwea hospital and to karira primary school then turning left and making a loop and running on the tarmac road into Mwea Town to the finish at Mwea school.
SPONSORSHIP PACKAGES

BENEFITS TO THE SPONSOR

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<td>Logo inclusion on all marathon correspondence indication level of sponsorship.</td>
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<td>Announcements - Your Organization will receive recognition by name “Thank you” acknowledgments over the public address system at the Event Site, which will be made a maximum of twice per hour.</td>
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<td>Logo inclusion on marathon certificates</td>
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<td>Put tents at spectator points/water points</td>
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<td>Certificate of appreciation</td>
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<td>Promotional Banners along the marathon route/spectator points.</td>
<td>10 A-frames AND 10 Tear Drops At start point And/or Spectator Points</td>
<td>6 A-frames AND 6 Tear Drops At start point And/or Spectator Points</td>
<td>4 A-frames OR 4 Tear Drops At spectator Points Only</td>
<td>2 A-frames OR 2 Tear Drops At spectator Points Only</td>
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<td>Staff members to get a free entry and run with company branded t-shirts.</td>
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TITLE SPONSOR

Your entitlement as a Title Sponsor (sponsorship of 5,000,000)

- **Exclusivity** – Exclusivity in the territory for which the competitions will be held, Your Organization will be granted the rights in the Title Partner’s product/service category.

- **Designation** – Your Organization has the right to use official designations such as “Your Organization- Mwea Classic Marathon”, and other designations as agreed on Products, promotional items and advertising.

- **Event Marks** – Title Partner has the right to use all Event Marks in advertising, promotions, on or in close connection with Products in the Territory only, and always in connection with its designation to indicate a partnership association. Title Partner may also design composite logos combining the Event Marks and Title Partner’s own name/logo.

- **Athlete Number & Presentation Bibs** – Your Organization name/logo to be printed on all the Bibs used at the competition.

- **Composite Boards** – Your Organization Products name/logo incorporated in the Event title on composite boards placed at the Event Site, in areas to be defined.

- **Awards Podium** – Your Organization Products name/logo incorporated in the Event title/logo on the front of the awards podium, to a maximum height of 30cm.

- **Special Awards** – Your Organization has the opportunity to sponsor elements of the Event, and to make special awards to participants.

- **Print Materials** – Your Organization name/logo included on the print materials.

- **Franchise Facilities** – Your Organization may sell Products on an exclusive basis at the Sites, in a manner as to be agreed.

- **Advertising Logo** – inclusion on print advertising – newspapers
BRAINS BEHIND THE MARATHON

The Mwea classic Marathon was the brain child of Mr. Michael Waweru, the immediate former Commissioner General at KRA, after he and others felt the need to give back to the society by way of:

- Empowering the school going youth in the Mwea districts the MCM mentorship programme.
- Encouraging the non-school going youth to change their mindset from engaging in self destruction activities like drug abuse to self development activities like sports.
- To get to the general public interested in sporting activities as away of keeping them busy to avoid idleness.

It was felt that the marathon was a good starting point. The committee members being professionals in other fields were willing to give back to the society by offering their services, time and meeting their travel and accommodation costs. This is a non-political set up as all the people involved are professionals in their own fields and are not interested in politics.

The first marathon was run in September 2009 and since then, four more have been organized with the sixth edition scheduled for 6th September, 2014.

To give the marathon a local flavor, there are awards given to each of the top ten finishers for both men and women who are identified by the registration process.

The starting/finishing point is Mwea Boys secondary school which is centrally located. So far the marathon has become an important item for the Mwea residents and other sporting groups.

IN HIS OWN WORDS...

Mwea Classic Marathon has earned its place as the biggest social event outside political rallies that bring the Kirinyaga County together and catapults Mwea in the national limelight. The pishori brand has been properly positioned and so has its origin; The Mwea irrigation Scheme.

Besides equipping all the secondary schools with books, the continuous engagement of students through mentorship has resulted in notable improvement in KCSE performance. Add to this the campaign for behavioral change among the youth especially in regard to illicit brew intake, and you fully appreciate the full power of the marathon in inspiring the next generation.

Among long distance runners in the country, Mwea Classic Marathon has earned its place as one of the best organized sports events. I take pride in helping create The Mwea Classic Marathon and more so for getting the opportunity of being part of the change process and a friend to the Mwea people.

I personally look forward to running in the 6th edition of the Mwea Classic Marathon. I thank the organizing committee for keeping the run on marathon.

I PERSONALLY LOOK FORWARD TO RUNNING IN THE 6TH EDITION OF THE MWEA CLASSIC MARATHON AND THANK THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE FOR KEEPING THE RUN ON MARATHON.
Funds: Sources and Spending

The MCM committee solicits for funds from corporate organizations and well-wishers. The funds are used to fund the actual marathon and all the activities surrounding it such as procuring for the running shirts, posters and banners and awards among others. Any surplus funds after the marathon are channeled to the schools through the MCM mentorship programs, again conducted on voluntary basis. The MCM mentorship programme has been able to achieve the following:

- Sponsored two students from each secondary school to a leadership camp organised by platinum Alliance Consultanys who are the local representatives of the world famous Antony Robbins Foundation of San Diego, USA and in the last three years MCM has sponsored students to a worldwide leadership meeting once a year in San Diego, USA.
- Supplied motivational books to all public primary and secondary schools within the Districts.
- Organised mentorship metings in all secondary schools where we invite professional speakers on topics such as:
  - Identity
  - Attitude
  - Relationships
  - Self esteem
  - Goal setting
  - Study skills

The committee felt that these are weak areas of the students in Mwea hence the need to start with them while we determine what else needs to be done and how we proceed. Our professionals have also visited various schools and participated with the schools management and parents on issues that affect individual schools. The mentors have contributed towards a teachers’ motivation scheme where in addition to cash awards to the best performing students, they have issued recognition certificates to the teachers to deliver better results.

All the stakeholders have contributed to the massive improvement in the Education level in Mwea, but from the information on the ground the marathon team has contributed due to its many activities which are widely felt in the area and we believe we have better people than when we commenced.
In 490 BCE, a Greek soldier named Pheidippides ran about 25 miles from Marathon to Athens. He was tasked with reporting the Greek's victory with the Persians and, given the urgency of his mission; he must have run non-stop the entire distance. As soon as Pheidippides had reported the news he fell to the ground, dead. Over two centuries later, at the first modern Olympic games in 1896, the brave soldier got his recognition: a race held in his honor – the marathon.

The Mwea classic marathon is one part physical endurance, one part adventure and a large part giving back to the community. Mwea classic Marathon is held every year at the Mwea secondary school. The marathon uses ‘smell the rice’ as the tag line and plays host to Olympic stars. The Mwea classic marathon was inaugurated on the 12th of September 2009 at the Mwea boys’ secondary school. For an African youth, all days are the same and without motivation he wonders what his mission in life is. There is hope for the world and the young are part of it. The event is held every year to promote education in the area and nurture youth talent. The 2014 edition will be the 6th Mwea classic marathon edition. The Mwea classic marathon is associated with Kenya’s largest scheme that spread along rivers Thiba and Nyamindi in Kirinyaga County.

Objectives
The main objective of the marathon is to empower the youth to enable them make their rightful share of contribution to the society, to encourage the youth to participate in more productive activities, and shun illicit brew and criminal activities. The marathon therefore encourages youth from the various Mwea sub-locations to participate in the marathon and to continue running through the formation of running clubs.

The other objective is Education.
It was a pity to realise that since 1971 there had never been good results in the schools in Mwea. This led to the professionals in the area to organise this event with a focus on Education. Since the inauguration of the marathon in the year 2009, Mwea has had a record of good results where we have seen many students getting admission to public universities.

By Lennah Wambui
The run targets high school students within and without the district. The target audiences for the marathon are:

- Students
- Athletes
- Corporate
- County Government
- The Public

The local community gets a chance to show out the best of Mwea and to show case their products as they sell their goods and also get to participate in the marathon. Mwea is a tourist attraction site and so to the existing tourists and the potential ones, they will have the opportunity to experience the sights and sounds of Kirinyaga, for the fun loving individuals the marathon is always filled with fun activities. Above all one gets to experience the uniqueness of the marathon which is the overstretched and beautiful to the eyesight; the rice paddies.
FACTS ABOUT KIRINYAGA

Kirinyaga county is located in the Central Region and it covers an area of 1,478.1 square kilometres. It comprises of four constituencies & districts namely: Ndia, Gichugu, Kirinyaga central and Mwea. The county of Kirinyaga borders Nyeri to the North West, Murang’a to the West and Embu to the East and South. The population of the county stood at 528,054 persons in 2009 with an annual growth rate of 1.4 percent.

Eligible voting population in the county is 339,072 persons with Mwea constituency having the highest number of eligible voters at 120,646 and Ndia constituency having the lowest at 62,990 persons.

There are 262,715 registered voters in the county with Mwea having the highest number of registered voters at 86,894 and Ndia having the lowest at 49,244 voters.

Labour force population was projected to go up from 324,596 in 2009 to 338,229 currently.

The county has six major rivers namely; Sagana, Nyamindi, Rupingazi, Thiba, Rwanuthambi and Ragati, all of which drain into the Tana River. These rivers are the principal source of water in the county. The water from these rivers has been harnessed through canals to support irrigation at the lower zones of the county especially in Mwea. There is a dam being constructed in the county at Gichugu Constituency as well as rehabilitation and expansion of Mwea irrigation scheme. The water resources, if optimally harnessed, will boost agricultural production in the county and contribute to sustained economic development and poverty reduction.

Agriculture is the most important activity in the county with 87 percent of the total population deriving their livelihood from the sector and accounting for 72 percent of household income. The type of
Kirinyaga is a quiet haven for nature lovers, the perfect place to relax and experience with nature. From the snow capped Mount Kenya, the mountain itself is an awe-inspiring sight with its ragged peaks, and equatorial snow. Mount Kenya is surrounded by a belt of verdant forest that is an equally fascinating destination. Cool highlands that surround its base are also worth a visit. The forest is ideal for game viewing, and there are crystal clear mountain streams that are the perfect place to land a Trout. Located at the heart of Mount Kenya is the iconic castle forest lodge where you can experience the sunrise and sunset as you dine in the company of the elephants on a lucky day.

Kirinyaga is the home of adventure tourism, just a few meters from Sagana falls you get to experience a unique and breathtaking nature’s environment at savage wilderness. If you want to experience our own wonder of the world, the visit the God’s bridge in Gichugu and the seven spectacular waterfalls along river Nyamindi. You can also get an encounter with the culture around Mount Kenya at Thingira cultural village which is located along Kenya’s longest river-River Tana.

Kirinyaga is the home for Ornamental fish commonly known as samaki wa mapambo. The fish are beautiful to the eye and also breathtaking.

crops grown is influenced by the various ecological zones. Main crops include rice which is grown in paddies in the lower zones and tea which is grown in the upper parts of the county. Coffee is also a major crop grown in the upper and middle zones. Other major crops grown include bananas, tomatoes, beans, mangoes, maize and other horticultural crops.
PICTURES OF PAST EDITIONS
“The world is like an ocean where everybody has to learn how to swim.”

Meet the assistant games teacher of the historic venue for the Mwea classic marathon, Mr. Joseph Kinyua Muriithi, a Kiswahili teacher at Mwea boys with a passion for sports. It was a dream come true for the teacher when he was transferred from his previous school, this is because he always heard about the MCM but wished he could be a part of it.

The MCM has had a great impact in the academic, social and general welfare of the students and the entire Mwea community at large. The MCM has brought great exposure and free publicity about the school, the community has the courage to be identified with the marathon, and they feel a sense of ownership, showcasing the beauty of the Mwea community due to the overstretched rice paddies and the greatest gift to the students and the entire secondary schools in Mwea: Educational materials. The enrollment in the school has increased since the inception of the MCM.

The MCM has exposed the entire Mwea community to the whole country and

Mr. Joseph Kinyua Muriithi
Mwea boys is proud to be associated with the MCM, since it hosts the event. It has also enhanced a good relationship between the school and the Mwea community. He says that the students have had a positive influence due to the mentorship programme, where motivational speakers talk to the students and encourage them to dare dream, and to believe in their dreams and know they can accomplish anything they set their minds on.

The students always participate in the marathon, they are aware of the saying that work with no play makes Mwea boys to be dull students. They are advised to balance academics and sports, this is because one has to be learned so as to thrive in the society, for example “we see that very popular athletes are poached by the major companies to advertise their products, this is because they took their studies seriously as they realized their talents.” He says.

The MCM has also been a motivation to the teaching staff. They have set a target to the teachers; when a student scores an A grade in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education, the subject teacher is awarded with a token and a certificate of performance.

The achievement that Mwea boys have had is due to the warm heart of the well wishers and the sponsors. On behalf of the school and the entire Mwea community, the teacher gives a vote of thanks to the sponsors and says that they truly appreciate their efforts and they promise to extend a hand by giving a good performance. We would not forget the Provincial Administration and the Police for their support.

**THE ACHIEVEMENT THAT MWEA BOYS HAVE HAD IS DUE TO THE WARM HEART OF THE WELL WISHERS AND THE SPONSORS.**
Sober Again

Alcoholism benefits no one. Anyone can become alcoholic. Say NO to alcohol!

GET YOUR COPIES NOW!
A German philosopher, Johan Von Goethe once said: “whatever you can do and dream you can do it. Boldness has genius, power and magic.”

For an event to be successful, a pre-preparation has to be carried out. Even in the technical department where it’s the central point. Meet the person who has been behind the success of the MCM in the technical department. Epitas Nyaga Mugai, a physics and mathematics secondary school teacher is the technical manager of the MCM. Before main event, many activities are carried out so that the marathon can be a success.

There are time trials to the routes; practice has to be done in advance before the main event. A number of four trials are carried out so as to familiarize the participants with the routes and also to get enough practice so as to sensitize oneself to the marathon. The students and the local community members are the participants in the time trials.

He also under sees to the main event. The water points and the individuals who will issue the water to the participants of the marathon, the leading motor cycles who usually lead the marathon participants have to be trained,

He has to make sure that the funnel of the judges is ready and the peaching up of the tents, the time keepers tent, then the recorders with their computers so that the results can be prepared for release. The technical manager is responsible for many activities from the pre-event to the main event.

His involvement in the MCM is because since its inception, there have been a big improvement in academics and the trends of those joining university have increased.
HELPING MWEA ONE STEP AT A TIME.

By Lemayian Korash

A good number of them have never set foot on a racing track, having spent the better part of their lives chasing careers and watching over their families. And now, most of them in the ages of between 40 and 65, they, all of a sudden, have found a common interest in ‘running the world’... and having a great deal of fun while at it. Looks can be deceiving and you should not judge a book by its covers.

Meet the urban Swaras who adore running as a lifestyle. The group started with just four members but since its inception it has grown tremendously with over a hundred members. The running club is based in Nairobi, they started running as a group in 2006 before getting formally registered in 2010. Their motto is “Running is living”. They run as a self test, that is competing against oneself.

The urban swaras involvement in the MCM is for a good course. The club has their calendar route and events where the committee draws the calendar for the events to give to the society and MCM is usually on their calendar. They also get to have friends to participate in the MCM apart from the club members. “You can see, you can touch, and you can feel the benefits that the urban swaras have had in the MCM.” Says the chairman. This is because many youths get challenged to see a participant in the marathon, who is of age but still has the physical stamina to run a full marathon just for charity but not as a competitor. When you run you get discipline and you; focus on important things, train hard and you could win the prize money or a sponsor will spot you and your talent or education will be natured.

“We support local tourism; we travel and see the country and in the process, raise money for charity” says the clubs’ treasurer, Madam Jael Amara, a Business and Development Director at Consumer Options. Our involvement in the MCM has had a positive influence to the youth and it has always been a wonderful opportunity to test our speed at Mwea since it is a flat geographical area.

The urban swaras motivation is their togetherness as a club, they are a family who are bound by friendship. They have a common interest in sports tourism and the urge to visit the most serene and remote areas through running in Kenya and beyond.

THE URBAN SWaras STARTED WITH JUST FOUR MEMBERS, BUT SINCE ITS INCEPTION IT HAS GROWN TREMENDOUSLY WITH OVER A HUNDRED MEMBERS.
The clubs’ chairman Mr. Ajaa Olubayi a lawyer by profession, says since his days at National youth service where there is an every morning run as part of the military training, even after finishing his training, he kept on with the habit. He later stopped jogging and started running. He then came up with the idea of forming a club and requested some of his friends whom he had been jogging with and came up with the urban swaras.

Swaras is a gazelle which is based in the wild. For the urban swaras, they run out in the wild but are based in the city. They are domestic tourists who run to see beautiful sites of Kenya where a tour company will never get a chance to showcase. They have runs every Saturday morning in different parts of the country, they never go back to the same place in a year. They mark their trails and after every run there is a bottle of water and a fruit for each participant.
AGE IS JUST A NUMBER

By Lennah Wambui

"Through running, we impact people’s lives, a big percentage of the diseases today are lifestyle diseases, this is because people are very inactive, I urge you to engage in sports and your trips to hospital will be minimal."

Joyce Nduku, a 60 year old, Urban Swaras member observed that running in MCM is an experience of a kind in the world. "I started running ten years ago for the fear of getting arthritis. She had a pain in her right knee and a friend advised her to exercise through jogging. Nduku, a Kenya Medical research Institute nutrition field worker observes. This was before the 2nd edition of the standard chart marathon. She started training and on the event day she participated in the half marathon, it was a miracle because since then the knee pain disappeared completely.

She then made up her mind that if running can keep her physically fit, why not continue running, and since then she has never looked back. Her passion for running is driven by the fact that she knows she has the ability to impact on peoples’ lives; however little, and mostly to the youth who are getting involved in illicit brews and failure to take education seriously. She says that through sports there is a lot of development. "When you engage in sports you are occupied and you get to realise your potential” She is also a sports ambassador and a domestic tourist.

Her involvement in the MCM is to empower the youths through education. Her concern is so much on the Kenya certificate of secondary education. “If Kirinyaga can lead Nationally in the Kenya certificate of primary education, why does the trend not follow suit in the Kenya certificate of secondary education?” she observes. “Through hard work from the students and the involvement of the mentorship programme that has been brought about by the organizers of the MCM, the change that we need to see can be achieved.” she adds.

THROUGH HARD WORK FROM THE STUDENTS AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME THAT HAS BEEN BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE ORGANIZERS OF THE MCM, THE CHANGE THAT WE NEED TO SEE CAN BE ACHIEVED.
Meet Kevin Wokabi: The Boy who scored an A- (Minus) in Mwea Boys’ High School

By Gitau Waweru

“Life can be described in four ways: A journey, a bottle, a pilgrimage or a race. Pick your own metaphor but the finishing necessity is all the same. If it is a journey it has to be completed. If it is a bottle its contents have to be finished. If it is a pilgrimage it has to be concluded. If it is a race it has to be won.”

This is what Kevin Wokabi had to say as advice to those students he has left behind and wish to follow in his footsteps. “The sky is the limit” he said citing that nothing should be able to stop a hardworking student from realizing his dreams.

A sigh of relief, a confident smile and assurance of a brighter future usually describe the outlook of a student who has done well in their exams. And so it was with Kevin when he spoke to Mwea Classic Marathon, an initiative that has been running a mentorship program in all schools in Mwea area to ensure that there are more students making a transition from secondary school to the university.

Kevin Wokabi, 18, after working so hard through the four years of high school, attained an A-.

Wokabi told of the inspiration and motivation he gets from his mother Faith Wairimu Mbutu, “Her hard work, advice and love made me to work even harder to make sure that she is proud of me,” he said, “And my brother Philip Mbutu just inspires me with his hard work. He has taught me a lot with his personality. I can say he is my mentor, my inspiration.”

Kevin talked with respect about his older brother who is pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in Business Information Technology (BBIT) at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.

Dedication to Study

Many students usually have this notion that those who perform extremely well in the national exams have a certain secret. According to Wokabi, there is no secret. “It was right there in the open. It was about working hard and dedicating your time to study,” he said with a smile, “You could describe me as a ‘bookworm’.”

One has to put in individual effort to ensure that they get the success they are pursuing. But as Wokabi puts it, individual effort alone cannot get you there.

“Group work and group discussions played the trick. We were a team of five people. In fact one of my friends used to wake me up, because honestly, I am a poor riser.” Wokabi said that as a team they used to be there for each other. “The good thing is that we have all made it to the university,” says Wokabi about his team mates.

What was your Typical Day like?

A typical day for Wokabi started as early as 4.30 a.m. After having a bath, Wokabi would make it to class by 4.50 a.m. for morning preps. He would go through the normal classes which would run up to 4.30 p.m. Since he was in Form Four that did not mean that he did not participate in games. Wokabi loved football and every day he would play football after classes up to 6.30 p.m. The night preps ran between 6.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. Being a boy brought up with Christian principles, he would attend the Christian Union fellowship between 9.00 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. Thereafter Wokabi would return to class to read on his own up to 10.00 p.m. From 10.00 p.m. they would study in a group up to 11.00 p.m. when they went on to sleep. “We used to extend our study time up to 11.00 p.m. since normal prep time ended at 9.00 p.m.” said Wokabi.

Asked if he would do it differently if given a chance to do it all over again he said, “I’ll do nothing differently. If it worked the first time then I think that’s the best way to do it!”

Attributes

“I attribute my success to my family. I dedicate it all to my mum,” said Wokabi who came out on top of his class. He said that his mother, brother and grandpa, who is a retired major of the Kenya air force, gave him priceless advice. “Their dedication, commitment and mostly financial support gave me the drive to succeed. My grandfather believes in me,” he said.

W o k a b i whose dream is to do Pharmacy or Biochemistry in the
University of Nairobi said that his peers and classmates contributed a lot towards his sterling performance. He admitted that they gave him peaceful and friendly environment to learn. “And the stiff competition from my classmates, especially from Ali Adan, kept me on my toes,” he admitted with gratitude. Ali was the second best student in Mwea Boys High School scoring a B+ (plus).

Wokabi’s teachers played a very big role in his good performance. According to Wokabi, their commitment and dedication to ensuring that all students performed well worked for him.

**Does the type of school matter?**

It is not about the kind of school one goes to. It is about individual efforts. “Even those in national schools,” said Wokabi, “Have to put in individual efforts to ensure that they get good grades.”

However, according to Wokabi, schools provide a very strong basis for the performance of their students. He noted that many students cannot make it to the so called ‘big schools’ because of lack of finances. What is worse is that some young kids like him do not have the privilege of getting an education the way he did. Wokabi’s advice to them is, “If you have a passion for an education, do not give up. No matter how long it takes, it will come to you.”

He also said that he believes that things are getting better. With scholarship like ‘Wings to Fly’ from Equity Bank Wokabi is hopeful that those financially challenged students can now get an education as long as they do not lose their passion for an education.

**Mwea Classic Marathon**

This is a yearly event that takes place every first Saturday of September. It is aimed at pooling together youths from Mwea and its environs to participate in self-developing activities while keeping them away from self-destructing activities such as alcoholism and drug abuse.

Wokabi praised the organizers of the event saying that it is a good initiative. Although he has not participated directly as a runner, he participated as volunteer distributing water bottles to the racers.

Given a chance to give back to the Mwea community Wokabi said that he would in future offer financial help, build better education facilities, increase the teaching staff and even offer subsidies to school fees so that more and more youngsters would be enrolled to secondary schools.

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The Spirit Of Perserverance

By Lennah Wambui

“Our minds are like umbrellas, they work best when open”

This is a quote that Faith Wacera Njaramba has always put into use as one of the ingredients for success.

She is an alumnum of Karoti girl’s secondary school class of 2012; currently she is a first year student at the University of Nairobi undertaking a Bachelor of Science degree specializing in range management. The journey has not been smooth for her to climb up the success ladder in regard to education, but she has always been focused, diligent and hardworking. She persevered the challenges of education and emerged as a conqueror.

What was your typical day like?

A typical day for the soft-spoken lady started at four o’clock in the morning where she would take a shower and get ready for the day. At 4:30 am she would do her personal studies. She paid much attention to the tough subjects, although she would always balance all the subjects. The morning studies ended at the time for breakfast 6.00 am. Breakfast allocation time was thirty minutes where everyone would carry out their cleaning duties before the normal classes commenced. As for Faith, she was a prefect (laboratory captain) and so her duty was to supervise her fellow students. They would then attend their normal classes as they participated in the co-curricular activities. They had formed a discussion group of four where they would study up to the late hours of the night after the normal night preps.

Challenges

Her four years in school were not a walk in the park. Her challenges started when it became difficult for her parents to raise her school fees. She was down but not out. Her name FAITH means a strong belief in God, gave her the courage to trust in God that there will be a light at the end of the tunnel. Her third term in form three was a difficult term since she had not paid a single cent of her fees, but she had the courage to report to school believing for a miracle. At her eleventh hour, she experienced a miracle; the principal called her and gave her the good news that a well wisher has paid for her the third term fees together with another student. Her joy could not be measured. She was so grateful although up to this day she has never known the identity of the well wisher.

Success

She owes her success to her principal Mrs. Kellen Mbugua. If it were not for her understanding and kind heart, she would not have had the chance to sit for her Kenya certificate of secondary school education. The year 2012 was the best year for her since she did not have to think about school fees, this is because the principal allowed her to learn for free for the three terms. She made a promise to herself that she would show her gratitude through hard work. Faith says that words alone cannot express her gratitude to her principal. And she is a woman of her own words, she scored an A- (minus) in the final secondary exam. She later applied for a job and paid the fees.

Does the kind of school matter?

It is the individual who matters, she says. She further explains that the teachers’ duty is to deliver 25% of the syllabus while the student takes care of the larger part, that is 75%. She also adds and says that during the holidays, the students get the chance to mingle with other students from other schools and they exchange ideas and reading materials, this makes one have an idea of what the other students learn in their schools.

Mwea classic marathon

Faith says that she is familiar with the marathon although she has never participated in it directly. It is due to the marathon that she never lacked a reference material in the library to assist her in her studies. When asked about the mentorship programme, she says that it is a good initiative to assist the youth, since one does not only go to school to pass, but to gain knowledge so as to assist the society. She says that the programme has really affected the performance of the students, this is because they are motivated and encouraged to work hard as well as advised to choose their career path wisely, and also taught how to be good role models.

“OUR MINDS ARE LIKE UMBRELLAS, THEY WORK BEST WHEN OPEN”
"Mwea is the only place where donkeys have rights and rice is grown in plenty".

The town also plays host to the Mwea classic marathon since the year 2009. Mwea is a town situated on the Embu-Nairobi Highway in Kirinyaga County and about 98 kilometers from Nairobi, what comes to mind is the rice farming associated with the area. The town’s original name originated from the word Ngurubani, coined from Kiswahili word Gorofani, which means, inside a storey house. The town came into existence in the early 1960s when rice farmers under the white settlers used to come to collect rice cash from the only storey house, which was their bank in the town. So, they would say, “Let us go to gorofani”, but they pronounced it ngorobaine, hence the name of the town at the time became Ngurubani. The first storey building is still there and it houses Mwea Multipurpose Cooperative Society.

History has it that the initial inhabitants of this town were African colonial detainees who later became labourers who were arrested from different places and detained at Kathigiriri. The detainees dug canals, prepared the shambas to plant rice, and were given land in return as tenants. The colonial government researched the once plain, flat land of Mwea in the 1950s and saw it was good for rice farming. It was later gazetted as an irrigation scheme. Today, Mwea is divided into two: Mwea East and Mwea West constituencies. Before, it was Kirinyaga South, which was later divided into Kirinyaga South and North. Mwea East is in Kirinyaga South whereas Mwea West is found in Kirinyaga North. Mwea town is in Kirinyaga South.

The 2009 census gave the population of Mwea constituency as 176,261. Since then, the population has grown fast, thanks to the liberalization of rice farming, which used to be controlled by the colonialists through the National Irrigation Board, a body that still exists. Rice farming is the main economic activity here and has seen the growth of huge milling companies like Mwea Rice Millers and Nice Rice Millers. There are also small factories that offer employment opportunities. Many people have migrated from different parts of the country to come and cultivate rice or trade in rice. There is also horticultural farming, which goes hand in hand with rice farming. The new county government has started building more staff offices at the former DC’s premises, with Kerugoya town as the county’s headquarters. A number of commercial banks have also pitched tent in Mwea town. The hotel industry is growing fast due to traders who come to buy rice from far and
Almost every media in Kenya has an article on the humility of the son of Jomo: the Kenyan president His excellency Hon. Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, his humility has not surfaced now that he is the president, it has always been a part of his life. The Mwea classic Marathon fraternity is a witness to that. Since the inception of the marathon, there has always been a guest of honor in every edition, and the current president of Kenya is among the many guests who have graced the marathon. During the third Mwea classic marathon, which was held on 10th September 2011, the then minister of finance who is the current president of Kenya was the guest of honor. His passion to see to it that the youth are educated and motivated so as to realize their talent has always been in his sleeve, this is because he contributed a sum of half a million Kenyan shillings, three hundred thousand was for the youth and two hundred was a dedication to the Mwea classic marathon.

In his first budget when he was the Finance minister, Mr. Kenyatta released Kshs 105 million to every constituency to finance infrastructure development, boost education and health care and revive other projects at the grassroots on what was dubbed economic stimulus package, an intensive, high-impact programme that aims to stimulate economic activity, create employment opportunities, encourage innovation in wealth-creation, spur entrepreneurship and support the building blocks that anchor a healthy, educated and innovative populace.

God doesn't call the qualified but qualifies the called lets pray for our president as he continues the quest to see that education is given the first priority to the youth.
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