Women in Kenya

East Africa Women's League Newsletter January 2026

Spring Valley wins Festival of Arts and Crafts Again!

But they were very closely challenged by Muthaiga who came second by one point !

Lavington tied 3rd overall with Nakuru but won the EAWL "64" cup for the best display stand.

The week of the Festival of Arts and Crafts saw **WEAL House** alive with activity, starting **Sunday** afternoon. As soon as church had finished the HQ crew erected the stands around the outside of the room, put out the baskets and generally set up everything ready for Monday.

On **Monday** the Branches came in with all their entries (except some Baking) labeling and setting them out ready for Tuesday's judging. I was very happy to see **Watamu** there for the first time in many years, **Gay** and her crew were a delight to assist as their enthusiasm was a infectious. City branch also made a stalwart effort not only with their entries but also getting their paper work correct, that really helps the judges and recorder!

Tuesday is the busiest day of the whole week with branches rushing to get their entries into the correct positions ready for judging to start at 10, and be completed by 1pm. After lunch there is a mad scramble for each branch to retrieve their entries, record the positions and cups and complete setting up their stands by 5pm. This year I actually completed entering all the judges sheet results also by 5pm! This does not mean the results were ready for publishing, it is very important to compare the judges returns with the branches' result sheet to ensure they match, if not resolve the differences. In the rush of Tuesday mistakes do happen but I am very pleased to say they were very few this year.

As well as reconciling the results **Wednesday** sees the stand judging and placing the cups awarded on the correct branch's stand. (Cont. Page 3 ->)

Dates for your Diary

While there is Friday Market every week, only the Kenchic & Farmers Choice weeks are mentioned here, the other weeks HQ provides the Coffee and Snacks.

Feb 13th Kenchic & Coffee by Spring Valley plus the chance to win their Valentine's Gift Basket!
Feb 27th Farmers Choice & Coffee by Library
Mar 13th Kenchic & Coffee by Rosslyn
Mar 26th AGM & 1st Council WEAL HOUSE
Mar 27th Farmers Choice & Coffee by Muthaiga
Apr 10th Kenchic & Coffee by Lavington
Apr 24th Farmers Choice & Coffee by City
July 15th 2nd Council "UpCountry" Venue to be confirmed

Festival of Arts & Crafts 2026

Monday preparing for Judging

Tuesday Judging

Nakuru tied third overall

Watamu/Malindi bought the beach to Nairobi , winning the Mazuri Sana Cup for the branch that tried hard as well as 3 other cups.

Nanyuki's trophies included the Margery Dugdale for the most stylish exhibit that went to Di Allen for her cross stich pink love birds.

Thika was 5th overall and won the Gurney Cup for highest placed branch with 20 or less members

Karen/ Langata came 2nd in the display stand judging

Rosslyn Made a great effort winning three cups and coming 4th with their display stand.

City gained two cups

Festival of Arts & Crafts Continued:

Thursday was **3rd Council** which is reported elsewhere.

Friday concluded the festival with the **Christmas Faire** that includes all the usual Friday market stalls as well stands from other branches and a very festive atmosphere.

Everyone is charged a 200/- entry fee which includes viewing the stands while shopping, eating and catching up with friends !

The huge **national raffle** which this year raised over **700,000/-** was drawn. **Jane Parmley** was again the magnificent coordinator ably assisted by **Cheryl Barretto** and **Jolene Wood.** The first prize of two **Safarilink** tickets to the **Masai Mara** and 2 nights for two at **Seringet Mara Camp**, donated by **Nigel Archer Safaris**, went to **Jamna Chauhan** of **Spring Valley.**

The funds for the raffle have been distributed to the following EAWL Branch projects:

1. Little Sisters of the Poor, Mombasa
2. Little Sisters of the Poor, Nairobi
3. Arap Moi Children's Home, Nakuru
4. Granny Project, Embu
5. Dream Project, Matisia
6. Hope Home, Eldoret
7. Kobujoi, Tachasis and Givavei Schools, Nandi
8. Association of Physically Disabled for Kenya
9. Macheo Centre, Thika
10. Mogra Children's Home, Nairobi
11. St Martin's School, Kibagare
12. Crystal Choir, Nairobi

After **Lavington's** traditional lunch of **Bangers & Mash,** the branches dismantled their stands with all the exhibits being carefully packed for the journey home.

Finally HQ staff stepped in to dis-assemble all the stands and ready the building for Saturday church…

The complete week was very ably orchestrated by **Frances Cattermole** with the permanent HQ Staff of **Christine, Sammy & Jennifer** augmented by 3 extras, **Vanessa, Alice and Charles**.

Report by **Cathy Coyte**

This year the **Team Challenge** entries were displayed on a separate table rather than taking up branch stand space. There were three entries with **Muthaiga** winning the **KASHAVJEE FAMILY TROPHY.**

Nakuru had an interesting take, all their narrow streets were photos.

While **Spring Valley** had an amazing amount going on in their street.

The **MARGERY DUGDALE TROPHY** for the most meritorious exhibit went to **Di Allen** of **Nanyuki** for this detailed cross stitch picuture.

As usual the Pictorial Art section drew many high quality entries. The top photo was done by **Sophy Grattan** of **Nanyuki** and **Muthaiga** member **Mamuda** won the **Jean Hayes Bowl** for the most meritorious exhibit in the section.

The novice class for free embroidery drew two very different but interesting exhibits. **Cat Jensen** of **Nakuru** embroidered the necklace on a photo and **Sumaiyya Khalid** of **Lavington** produced this wonderful study of dragon flies.

The **Bob Fulton Bowl** for the most points gained by an individual was tied between **Cynthia Falconer-Taylor of Karen/Langata** and **Sumaiyya Khalid** of **Lavington**.

3rd Council

The well attended 3rd council held on Thursday 21st November opened with a prayer from **Renate Lotay**, of **Muthaiga Branch**. Following the official opening, apologies, the minute silence for members and family who had died since the lst council, and the acceptance of last council's minutes, **National Chair Stephanie Mwite** gave her address.

Stephanie opened by saying how privileged she felt to chair the League and she recognizes the trust the members have placed in her and the collective responsibility the council bears for the future of the organization. She went on to talk about the need to strengthen governance and institutional integrity and the steps being taken such as: The revision of the Constitution being undertaken by **Sue Howarth** and **Mary Angawa**. The strengthening of the financial systems to make them transparent and compliant. Ensuring the recruitment processes remain robust and the importance of thriving inter personal relationships, both within each branch, and between branches.

Stephanie thanked the **Executive Committee**, particularly **Frances Cattermole** for her leadership and the members who travel from all corners of Kenya for the monthly meeting, as well as the Nairobi members, all of whom give up their precious time to carry out the mandate given to us.

The educator in Stephanie showed as she addressed some issues that have come up with regards to the atmosphere at **Friday Market**, she requested all members to choose to bring warmth, patience, kindness, and encouragement particularly to the younger generation. She asked us to *refrain from divisive chatter, to move forward together. Not in division, but in unity. Not in fear, but in purpose. Not in competition, but in service.*

Stephanie was also very clear that she will follow the constitution that allows her to be chairman for two years with the option of a third year. She made the following deeply personal remarks.

" I must speak to the significance of this moment in history. As the first Native Kenyan chairperson, I stand here not by my strength alone, nor by my achievements alone. I stand here because generations of remarkable women both White and Black refused to surrender their dreams, their dignity, or their possibilities. As Maya Angelou so powerfully reminds us: "When I show up, I come as one, but I stand as ten thousand." When I stand in this position, I do so carrying the voices, the courage, the resilience, and the sacrifices of countless women—many whose names we may never know, but whose impact we still feel. And just as I stand on their shoulders, I am committed—deeply committed—to lifting and mentoring the many women who will come after me. Let us honour the past, protect the present, and prepare the future. And let us remember: the East African Women's League has never been built by one person, one chairman, or one moment. It has always been built by all of us—women of courage, women of vision, women determined to leave this organisation stronger than we found it! "

Stephanie closed her address by thanking, all the branches who had hosted and inspired her during her travels, everyone who helped make the **Festival of Arts and Crafts** so successful, and **Jane Parmley & crew** for the ever popular raffle.

The **Hon.Treasurer Rose Kinuthia** reported that for 2024 while subscriptions were down, donations were up, giving a small increase in income, but expenses were up by a higher amount so for 2025 all cost savings are being considered. Questions were asked as to why there had been a forensic tax audit for the past 10 years despite having a KRA compliance certificate, it was explained that the KRA could still come and audit and per the management reports from previous audits we were not in compliance with certain regulation changes. We are all up to date now and have hired a temporary part time book keeper and installed up to date software to ensure that going forward we meet all regulations and standards. The council adopted the 2024 Accounts and agreed to keep Kody Africa as the auditors for the 2025 accounts.

Zone Vice Chairs, Cherry Ritchie and Ludmilla Shitahka, gave reports about the activities of branches in their zones.

Jenny Davy gave the balloting committee report reminding members that as two of the Zone vice chairs have completed their 3 year term the committee is needing nominations for their replacements.

Cathy Coyte gave the Ed & Pub committee report, announcing that the printed magazine has been replaced by regular newsletters and a new whatsapp group has been set up to enable better inter branch communications. The committee is also working on a 4 page fact sheet to explain the workings of the League to new members.

Lesley Sardelli of Spring Valley receiving the Grigg Challenge Cup for the branch gaining the most points

Following the closure of the council meeting the major Festival of Arts & Crafts trophies were presented plus the Cumberledge Cup that is a personal award from the National Chairman, this year Stephanie awarded it to the Goat Derby Team that has raised so much fun and funds at the coast for so many years.

After which we were enlightened on the benefits of fermented foods by Liz Wanjiku of the ProbioticsPantry.ke out of Nakuru, though they ship around the country

Finally we were all able to enjoy a great lunch courtesy of Muthaiga Branch.

If you want to see all the photos I took at during the FOAC week, and the full results, you can find them at https://bit.ly/4auXcp0 or follow the QR code.

Report by **Cathy Coyte**

For many members it was a delight to be able to catchup with **Maggie Parsons** during the FOAC week. She addressed the 3rd council saying while she missed her Nairobi friends she was very happy in Nanyuki. It is still hard to believe that 2 weeks later she was gone.

While we were all intrigued by past National Chairman Susie's hats, I think we need to monitor current NC Stephanie's shoes ;-)

Christmas Celebrations around the Country

Eldoret Branch held their Christmas lunch in the beautiful gardens of Janet & Peter Boit. They were privileged to host **National Chair Stephanie** who then went on to assist **Nandi Hills** branch with their Tombola Night held at Nandi Bears Club.

Stephanie had also attended **Nandi Hills Branch** Car Boot Sale .

Earlier **NC Stephanie** joined in the lively carol singing at **Narkuru's** party held in the garden of Lucy & George Vrontamitis.

Our busy NC's first stop on her western journey was **Gilgil's** party.

Gilgil Branch also held a party at Saidia Children`s Home

Festive cheer filled the **Mombasa** branch as the team came together to enjoy Christmas carols, fun games, and moments of shared laughter.

Lavington

Nanyuki started the season with their annual Christmas Fair and continued the festivities by carol singing and gift distributing at 2 hospitals and the Women's prison.

Rose, Helen, Sue, Sophy distribute Christmas Gifts to Nanyuki Women's Prison during the Carol singing.

To end their centenary year **Nakuru Branch** sponsored the planting of 100 indigenous trees in the Bahati Forest as part of it's reafforestation program.

MOMBASA BRANCH recently donated an overlock machine to the **Girl Guides** to support their skill-building and training programs. This donation is the branches way of supporting Guides journey and contributing to their development of their members. They are grateful for the opportunity to help such a dedicated and inspiring organisation.

Anne Sanders & **Susie Edwards** lay a poppy wreath on behalf of EAWL, on Remembrance Sunday at Ngong Road

From the Editor

Happy New Year dear readers, they say January is the longest month of the year, it certainly seemed like it for me waiting for the shingles virus to finally calm down and leave me alone. I had hoped to get the January newsletter out by the middle of the month, it is now the first week in Feb and I am still doing the finishing touches. This edition covers the incredible Festival of Arts & Crafts, third council and the multitude of Christmas celebrations that were held around the country. I am holding off reporting about any AGMs until the next edition which will come out after the League AGM in March.

Following the death of Margret Parsons I just wished I had taken notes during the many happy hours I spent in Maggie's company as she regaled to me her life history. To this end we are hoping to record members telling their stories while they are still alive, Ivy of City Branch and Alice of Muthaiga have promised to help with this project. Would you like to tell us your story?

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The annual **Gilgil Walk in The Wild** occurred in October at **Soysambu Conservancy** supported by 65 people.

No fireworks for **Nanyuki** on Nov 5th but they did have fun with Bingo and Lunch, hosted by **Louise Decker**.

Karen Langata Branch celebrated **Jean Greenwood's** 90th birthday! Jean is a wonderful member who attends EVERY meeting ….. On her birthday she participated in 'Chair Yoga' showing us all that we are never too old to try something new everyday!

Transitions

Maggie Bashforth of **Malindi/Watamu** , suddenly at the end of November. *"Our KHS is a community of like-minded folk who have in common their love of gardening and of nature. Maggie was quite literally a pillar of the Malindi community. She helped take care, on a daily basis, of some of the elderly and/or infirm of this community. She raised funds for EAWL and visited the Malindi prison often to distribute aid to female prisoners. She supported Sandpiper School where her son Staron attended, and she offered a hand of help to literally anybody who needed it, be it doing DIY for them, helping sort out their banking and finances, or just offering sound advice and support. Maggie will be so greatly missed from 'the community'. It is upon givers like her that we depend. "* From Kenya Horticultural Society (KHS) North Coast

Wilson Okumu Abok,formerly of **Moi University**, on 14th January 2026, husband to **Alice Abok** of **Muthaiga Branch**

Maura Butler of **Nakuru Branch**. She had been a long standing member of our Nakuru Branch in years gone by.

Pamela Ann Eccles —Mother to Cheryle Robinson of **Nakuru Branch**

Margaret Parsons whose history with the league goes back to before she was born as her mother was also a keen member. She died suddenly, on December 7th

For these lovely ladies we will have full appreciations of their lives in the next newsletter.