

Line of Patients Never Quite Ends in Swaziland...

Having returned to North America, Lions Dr. Harry and Echo and the boys have spoken in Ontario, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, Illinois and now are in Idaho for Christmas. But stories emerged as the VanderWals prepared to leave their beloved Swaziland two months ago.

"We were treating patients until we drove out the gate for the last time," said Lion Dr. Harry.

"They kept coming to our door and were so very sick. We couldn't just send them away," noted Lion Echo.



One HIV-positive friend, a former Luke Commission translator, sat outside the gate all one day waiting for Harry.

"This terrible disease zaps the life out of you, so you just want to be alone," Lion Dr. Harry explained.

This young man had lost most of his big smile and was walking ever so slowly. He'd had a persistent cough for months, and the left side of his chest bent him over in pain whenever he laughed or breathed deeply. He had struggled with anal discharge for a year, was tired and losing weight, and had no appetite.

"If he had come a day later, we would have been in the air and we couldn't have helped him," said Lion Echo. Lion Dr. Harry drew his blood, had it analyzed, and arranged for him to start receiving anti-retroviral drugs.

Swazis mistakenly think that antibiotics will cure AIDS. "Antibiotics might give them relief for a few weeks, but then all the symptoms return," Lion Dr. Harry said.

"So often people wait too long," he continued. That's why the VanderWals are thrilled that this year they started drawing blood on patients immediately after they tested positive at TLC's mobile bush clinics.

"It's a logistical nightmare to find a bush patient once he leaves a clinic," said Lion. Echo. "It's so much better if we give them the results of the blood tests on site."

Another last-minute patient treated in the waning days of the VanderWals 6th trip to Swaziland was a man whose one eye had been completely eaten up by herpes zoster (shingles) which is common in HIV patients. The shingles had simply gone untreated for lack of health care. The skin on his body from head to toe was sloughing off from a rampant fungal infection.



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Lion Echo. "You would not have believed the peace that suddenly surrounded him. It is always amazing! He was so grateful even though we could not fix him. We told him going to heaven was the only way to get eternal healing".

The VanderWals also formed a valuable partnership this year with the Lions Club of Manzini. Lions Club leaders taught Lions Dr. Harry and Echo about Swazi business practices. One new Lions friend told Lion Echo: "You do the believing, and I'll do the doing."

A few days before departure, a Lions member brought a little severely-burned boy to Lions Dr. Harry and Echo. The Lions Club intended to send him to South Africa for surgery. First the man wanted the VanderWals' opinion.



It was euphoria for me," laughed Lion Echo. "For months we had been trying to get someone in the U.S. to donate a skin-graft mesher and harvester, but it just had not happened."

So Echo suggested, "Why don't you buy the machine for the whole country with the money it would take to send her away."

Then the 3-year-old boy could recuperate with his family near, and countless other Swazi burn victims could be helped, too.

By the very next day the Manzini Lions Club had raised the \$3,500 needed to buy the skin-grafting machine.

"God's perfect timing again," said Harry.

