
Students Serving in Swaziland Speak Out

Nothing moves us to deeper thought about the meaning of life and Christ's part in drawing people from every nation and tongue to Himself than talking to young Americans who are serving short terms with The Luke Commission.

Two teams of Cedarville University nursing students and a few graduated registered nurses spent a month this summer in Swaziland.

These are their answers to tough questions, as they were put on the spot with nowhere to run and hide.

"What stands out most as you work with The Luke Commission?"

"The need," replied Erica Goecke, 20, of central Pennsylvania. "The people are not always smiling but neither are they afraid to accept help."

"The language barrier is big, and at first I had trouble," Erica continued. "Then I realized that we were communicating by bringing them free health care. It's easier to show them that I care than I thought it would be."

"What do you enjoy most about a bush clinic?"

"When the Swazis sing – that is my favorite part," said Kelly Donohoe, 21, from the Los Angeles area.

"At first it was hard to stick fingers and then draw blood to determine the CD4 counts of HIV-positive patients. But once I got the skill down, I could look them in their eyes and interact," explained Kelly. "I've never touched so many people in such a short period of time. Now that's my favorite."

Elizabeth Strode, 21, one of 11 children who grew up on her family's farm near Stockport, Ohio, was asked, "How did you get here?"

"I was never interested in missions until my senior year in high school. Then my whole focus changed. I went to Cedarville to become a nurse as a means to serve," answered Elizabeth.

"I did not know Swaziland even existed until last year. I applied to be on this team but did not expect to be accepted," continued Elizabeth. "I've learned that God can use all kinds of people. I'm so excited be part of The Luke Commission."

"What was the hardest part about coming to Africa?" This was asked of Sarah Peak, 20, of Galax, Virginia.

"Understanding the Swazi culture," replied Sarah. "My family is rather reserved, and it's hard to just go up and introduce myself. How does an American fit in? I don't want to offend. Children are easier. All I have to do is smile and take their hands."

"What has jarred your senses most?"

"When I prick someone's finger and look down after he or she leaves and see two little pink stripes, which means HIV-positive, I think 'this is just like a pregnancy test'," explained Brooke Larsen, 20 of Holland, Michigan.

"But that's life, and this is death," noted Brooke. "I have come to dread those little pink stripes, though I never thought of it before this trip. Putting faces to the diseases and faces to the statistics is mind-boggling."

Tiffany Schleuter, 21 of St. Louis, Missouri, returned to Swaziland this summer and stayed both terms with the Cedarville students and graduates.

"I'm not starting over again," Tiffany said. "It's a continuation, a little less of a honeymoon. I'm finding out what it's really like being a missionary."

"What are your struggles?"

"To keep the mindset of outright ministry and service," answered Tiffany. "I'm not just here to get certain jobs done, but to serve and to love the people. I'm challenged to look outside myself and my own life."

Assistant professor of nursing Marsha Swinehart of Chillicothe, Ohio, volunteered as a faculty leader on the first Cedarville team. "How is health care in Swaziland different from medical care in the U.S.?" she was asked.

Marsha added, "It's a privilege to part of a medical mission that really does tie all that together."

Marsha also enjoyed her days in a Manzini hospital. "Patients want you to pray for them, and they gladly accept tracts. That's a whole different feel than in American hospitals."

Cedarville 2005 nursing graduate Rebekah Sartori also revisited Swaziland for a 2nd term. She was interviewed while working in the eyeglass department distributing glasses donated by the Lions of Illinois, at one of this year's largest clinics.

"It's crazy, but I love it," Rebekah said, who lives in Corbin, Kentucky. "Many of these people really have bad eyes, and sometimes it's difficult to fit them with eyeglasses. But we keep trying. Several patients have cataracts, too, but we can pair them up with Dr. Pons for operations."

Earlier in the day, Rebekah applied her nursing skills in the medical department. "It's always neat for me to see how much better patients are after receiving IV fluids," she said.

"What about getting to the clinics?"

Nora Chasnov of Clifton, Ohio, laughed when she admitted that occasionally "I am scared." She noted there are no road signs off the tar roads and sometimes not even much of a road.

"Yet somehow, someone always knows where we're going and we always get there," said Nora. Being part of the rural mobile clinics has "deepened my love for the African people."

Rebecca Hawkins, 21, from Richmond, Virginia, regularly worked in the HIV department. It's a difficult place to be day in and day out.

"I watch the people when they first learn they are HIV-positive. I'm touched by The Luke Commission translators, they hold the patients hands. The translators know their own people and minister to them in ways I never could."

Senior nursing student Bridget Buenz of Yorkville, Illinois, spent many of her hours at the clinics assembling PET wheelchairs for handicapped patients.

"It's cool to build something and give it away to people who have crawled on their hands and knees," Bridget said. "The wheelchairs are strong and made for the bush."

Bridget said it now takes two people 30 minutes to assemble a wheelchair. "The night the container arrived, four of us worked two hours to put one together," she laughed..

Rachel Latario, senior nursing student from Groton, Massachusetts, said her trip to Swaziland has "taught me flexibility. I don't need to know everything to get by and to help these people. I've been humbled more than anything."

Rachel added, "Now my heart is passionate about missions. I want to be like the VanderWals and do this for the rest of my life, somewhere in Africa."

P.S. – We encourage you to join us and personally meet Lions Dr. Harry and Echo VanderWal at *An Evening in Swaziland: TLC Gala & Auction* on November 7 in Cedarville, Ohio. Enjoy delicious food, silent and live auctions, and a

stirring update from Harry and Echo. All proceeds will go directly to provide life-saving, mobile medical clinics in Swaziland. To register, visit www.cedarville.edu/tlcauction or call 877-233-2784. Deadline for registration is October 30.







