

(Day 1) July 2, 2010

Jambo and Greetings from Tanzania,

We* arrived in Mailisita last night and wanted to share with you what we learned on our first day back to the project since December.

With 17 Americans arriving last night and another 10 scheduled to arrive over the coming days, this year proves to be our biggest volunteer turnout yet. With the extra help of course come a few extra logistical challenges. For example, this morning we decided to try our hand at “phone booth stuffing” Fr. Kawishe’s pickup truck with seven people for the 6 mile drive from hotel to job site. All but one made it...Stan got stuck making the trip in the truck bed (don’t worry mom, of course I had my seatbelt on).

We arrived on site and were thrilled with the progress. The guesthouse is really taking shape and the ground floor exterior finishes are enough that you can begin to see what a splendid building the finished product is going to be. Our confidence in the ability of the guesthouse (hotel) to generate the income to run the school is very high. We took a brief tour to see completed plumbing and electrical (except fixtures), installed ground floor windows, and smooth plaster wall finishes throughout. The 2nd floor (guest rooms) is much less complete and only a few walls have been erected. That’s okay, because that’s where we intend to focus our building energy this summer!

Next we toured the school and were very excitedly greeted by our official Tanzanian Ministry of Education recognized 1st graders (woo hoo!). Head-mistress Mama Lucy and 44 watoto (children) in splendid uniforms greeted us in English and sang songs (also in English) to welcome us. Huge smiles on their faces – huge smiles on ours. After several years of work and visits it was extremely gratifying to see a well functioning English-medium school successfully teaching the area’s orphans and desperately impoverished.

We left the children to their studies and enjoyed a fine lunch of local cuisine with Fathers Raziki and Marunda. They filled us in on construction and schooling details and where we could be most helpful with the children and the building work. The children let out for the day around 1pm and sought us out for some more informal get acquainted time. The ~90 preschoolers were not in session this week and with the 17 of us we weren’t too badly outnumbered this time. Us more experienced hands had to laugh when we saw one of the college boys stoop down to give an exuberant child a piggy-back ride. We laughed because we knew that now he was going to have to give 43 more! But he got the last laugh as all the twenty-somethings chipped in and gave piggy-back rides to all who wanted ‘em. Ahhh, to be young.

Some of us rounded out the day with a couple hours of our favorite past time – carrying 45 lb. blocks up 2 flights of stairs to stage them for tomorrow’s construction work. At the suggestion of a “friend” in Chicago, we brought something called “brick tongs” that enable you to carry 2 blocks at once. Stan tried it first and decided 90 lbs. up 2 flights of

stairs was a bit much and so passed the tongs off to the next sucker,..ehr, I mean volunteer. This cycle of doing one trip and passing off the tongs continued until they were left to gather dust for the remainder of the trip!

Tomorrow, we will divide and conquer. Some will work with the children – teaching and playing games, and others will work up a sweat laying blocks for the guesthouse. Three more volunteers from Chicago arrive this evening...hmm, perhaps we'll dust off those brick tongs and tell them how *amazing* they work!

We hope to post you updates each day or so of our week here in Mailisita as well as to send you pictures upon our return.

Fr. Kawishe, Fr. Riziki and Fr. Marunda wish to express their thanks to you for your amazing generosity.

Kwaheri mpaka kesho.
(Goodbye until tomorrow)

* We: Linda and Katelin Creadon, Stan, Susanne, Nick, and Lauren Taylor, Abby Johnson and Matt Partain and 10 of his fellow students from Holy Cross College.