

(Update 2) July 3, 2010

Jambo and Greetings from Tanzania,

Bill and Mary Ann Sparer and Marie Oliverie arrived last night to join the crew. Mary Ann and Marie are both experienced teachers and looking forward to working with the children straight away.

Per our plan, which is not often the way things happen, we hit the ground quickly this morning and divided into two teams. Not quite guys against the girls, but pretty close! Linda and Susanne worked with one group to prepare for and then work with the first graders. They divided them into four groups: singing, two crafts, and a game.

We'll have to chalk one of the crafts up to a "learning experience". The idea was to have the children cut out an animal picture corresponding to the given letter of the alphabet, but they had apparently not seen scissors before. These space-age cutting devices proved a bit too complicated for the time allotted. "Thanks" to Marie for getting 'em through it with a smile.



Mary Ann employed her teaching background and lovely voice to teach her group educational songs for them to learn various English words. Singing is very big in the culture here and using it to teach can be very effective. A surprising added benefit was head mistress Mama Lucy's theatrical participation. In one song, the child in the middle is to act like a particular animal and the others guess (in English), but the children were at first too shy to try. Mama Lucy, always in character as the exquisitely proper school head matron, jumped in and performed a perfect and highly animated paka (cat). The children were wide-eyed and unsure if they could be so impudent as to smile and laugh at their head teacher, but eventually they couldn't help themselves but to giggle and join in wholeheartedly.

The singing game experience helped us to see some of the cultural differences in education. As many of you know, Libertyville's Terry Mulligan has been volunteering and teaching at the school for nearly six months now. With a teaching degree recently in his pocket and having spent time in both US and a number of local Tanzanian schools, he has seen first hand the sometimes striking differences between US and Tanzanian teaching styles. Teaching in Tanzania is almost exclusively lecturing from the blackboard to rows upon rows of quietly seated pupils. How the 1st graders can do this without popping Ritalin® like Chiclets® I'll never know. One of Terry's many

contributions has been to gradually expose the teachers to more participatory educational activities popular and successful in US schools.

Many folks back home such as Ariana Fano, Jeremy Rose, and Mindy Doss, have been



collecting easy-reader books for the children and I wanted to send some pictures back to show they were being put to good use. I was really going for a staged photo-op (sorry to ruin the illusion) when I handed “Biscuit Goes to Bed” to 1st grader Silvano, not really expecting he would do anything more than look at the pictures. However, Silvano read the entire book out loud to me! He struggled with a couple of words, like “curl up” but for the most part it was clear he understood what he was reading. I was totally impressed! (full disclosure: Silvano is one of the

brighter students and only a few of the kids are reading at his level yet).

Tomorrow, Terry heads out for a weekend at the coast with his parents Dave and Ginny. They’re in country for their first visit to see their son in action on the volunteer front. As tomorrow is Saturday, the kids will not be in school. This will give the rest of us an opportunity to make the 6 km. trek up mountain to deliver donated medical supplies to the clinic in Kibosho. We look forward to our local rafiki Dr. Allan Minja giving us a proud tour of his excellent facility and the amazing work they do.

Kwaheri mpaka kesho.
(Goodbye until tomorrow)