

July 2006

Our Lovely Volunteers

What makes a young medical or nursing student devote a month of their free time and a whole lot of their money on a plane ticket to come to a place like Zambia and work hard in a hospice and a day care all day long? Well, they all are very special people, for sure, but there is something more which I might never understand. I can only say how grateful we are to have them here and what an enormous impact they are having both in the hospice and the day care.



Sabrina is a PhD nursing student from Texas whom I have been communicating with for years since meeting her and her mother initially in Russia in the mid-90's. At that time she had no medical background but great aspirations. So you can imagine how wonderful it was to suddenly have at my side a mature, intelligent colleague who has been helpful at every turn. She has extensive palliative care experience as well as HIV experience so the hospice is really getting a lot of needed help, and she is great with the kids, too. They made masks and paper bag puppets, amongst many other things. Her parents made a lovely financial contribution to Tiny Tim and Friends, as well.

Chris, Ellen and Magali come from Ohio State University Medical School and are the direct result of a presentation that Jackie and Joe made after their experience here last year. These three are great, arranged their own tickets over, arranged their own housing and all three have jumped right into the spirit of things. Yesterday was a holiday here and I found them at the Day Care, labeling desks and chairs and windows with big signs to help the kids learn more English. Then they took me over to the hospice where they presented to me a new admission, a pregnant women with HIV and TB, and then we reviewed a woman with metastatic cervical cancer who we have been treating for pain. They are also quite keen on getting as many of the hospice patients on ARV's, probably their only hope of survival.

Simon is from Cardiff University Medical School and is a direct result of a presentation by Tim Kelly, our volunteer from last year. He certainly lives up to the high standards set by Tim, arranging and paying his own way over, staying in a youth hostel and sleeping in a tent every night, and working tirelessly at the hospice and day care. The kids love him and he has helped us out at home a lot,

too, with child care, medications and things. He is such a pleasure to have around, as they all are.

So, along with the amazing work that they are doing in both hospice and day care, it also allows us to breath a sigh of relief, that there are concerned and dedicated people out there, who, along with our donors, are making a difference in this small corner of Africa, giving freely of themselves, expecting nothing more than a little medical education in return. I know they come away with a rich cultural experience and a lot of gratitude from some very ill and bewildered Zambians and their families. But what makes them do it? I cannot say for sure, but I am enormously glad that they are here. And I hope they go home and send others like them, as soon as possible.