

South Sudan/Uganda update

September 30, 2011

From Michelle FitzGerald, reporting on the kid's art projects---

While Carrie, Marc and Joe treated the kids and their various illnesses, Kathy, Rose and I took individual photos of the children to use on their art projects and in a yearbook we're making for them. It took all morning and a very organized photo rotation line to get over one hundred children's photos. After we took their pictures, we were also able to give them cards that were hand made by the Vineyard JAM kids, letters written by my middle school students from South Bend Career Academy and name tags to help us call them by name. We Vineyard folks like our name tags. The children were so glad to receive these kind gifts and photos of other children. They love to hear from kids in America and learn a little more about us.

We ate lunch at the orphanage as the kids were given new sandals and the girls were given new dresses that we purchased from the market. The boys will get new clothes tomorrow. Then we prepared the mess hall for the art project after lunch. We talked about how God loved to create beautiful things and how He's honored when we create beautiful things for him too. I was impressed at how quickly these kids learned to use paint and brushes and sponges. We only worked with the younger children today, so I expect the older kids will catch on quickly too, and maybe get even more creative. Marc, Joe and Carrie came over to help with the art and showed the kids how to blend colors and fill up their canvas well. By four thirty we were tired and ready to call it a day. We let the paintings dry and said goodbye to the kids for the evening. We'll be there the next few days finishing up too.

One great moment in the day was when waiting for the photos to be finished, one of the kids saw a children's Bible story book and asked me to read it. As I flipped through the illustrated pages and summarized the familiar stories from the Bible, more and more children gathered around to see and hear stories about Jesus. Those that understood English well almost finished the stories for me. They knew about Jesus and his disciples and the stories from the New Testament. What an encouraging and joyous time that was! They love books and would love to have more at the orphanage. Hint, hint. God is good.

Blessings,  
Michelle

From Marc Merrill, reporting on the medical clinic---

The trip to the mission was challenging with many ruts and washed out road areas that made you feel like you were driving down one ravine and surfacing some time later. However, thank God, Clint informed us that it was greatly improved from a year ago.

We unloaded the truck with medical supplies and were met with many stares of apprehensive and curious children. Little did they know but as the children began to gather, our apprehension level was also rising. We had the clinic in Uganda behind us, but we now had to re-establish a triage that would handle the many complaints and illnesses while trying to understand the problems through an interpreter. After several minutes of stumbling and tripping over each other we actually developed a rhythm to handling the children in an orderly and professional fashion. Joe Biggers became the fungal

treatment specialist. He was the first line of defense and his care and gentle manner with each child showed the potential for a true medical specialist. The kids responded well to Joe and it made our job down the line easier. Next Carrie did a thorough but speedy analysis of the needs of the child. With the help of an interpreter we gleamed and sometimes coerced the maladies that seemed to make their lives difficult to bear. Upper respiratory infections, fever, cough, headaches, topical skin lesions and drippy noses headed the list of complaints.

I was told that none of the children would cry when you treated them but I did not know how true this would be until I started to treat a young man with infected feet. I first washed his feet and as I ran the wash cloth across his ankle I thought that caked mud was peeling away from his skin. He never cried but he grimaced so badly I asked if he was in pain. He shook his head "no" but as I further cleaned his feet I saw that skin was also peeling away. I carefully finished the cleaning and turned him over to Carrie for evaluation and waiting for the consult for oral meds. He never cried or whimpered but if my feet would have been in that condition I think I would have kicked me in the head.

God bless,

Marc

From Carrie Biggers, continuing to report on the medical clinic---

What a privilege it has been to work alongside Marc Merrill, and to also work with my son Joe Biggers. I have come to believe over the past five days that all of my professional experience was just preparing me to treat the people of Uganda and South Sudan! What an honor this has been for me. I have felt the presence of God keenly as I have examined and determined treatment for countless children and adults. Who am I to do that? Who would dare do that without believing that Jehovah Himself had called them there, and was overseeing our every move? I am convinced that He is there every minute ministering and giving our team wisdom and insight.

The need for medical care is outstanding. From fractured bones, to ovarian tumors, hernias, malaria, pneumonias, parasitic infections, upper respiratory infections, boils, abscesses, urinary tract infections the list goes on and on and so do the patients. These quiet regal people humble me with their acceptance and trust. What a beautiful people they are, and so deserving of Vineyard's outreach and your generous sacrifice. Truly life-saving medications and equipment are here because God softened hearts and did His will. In Uganda, a brand new ultrasound "just happened" to be in a place along with a medical radiology student. After waiting patiently all day for pregnant women to be scanned, a member of Pastor Solomon's staff who was helping with interpretation asked if she could be scanned because of a lump she felt in her abdomen. She was a young 28 year old woman. When she lay down on the examination table, I could feel a baseball sized mass in her abdomen. With ultrasound we could see that the situation was serious and needed immediate attention. That was our God at work, and He was generous enough to let us know it and see His perfect timing.

This knowing God's presence has continued here in South Sudan. My son Joe told me that as he rubbed and rubbed antifungal medications into the heads of the children at the orphanage today that he would spend that time praying over that child. This is our God at work, blessing the caregivers and the cared for, all at the same time! He is worthy of all of our praise!! Continue to pray for these dear ones of South

Sudan as we continue our clinics over these next few days—“the prayers of a righteous man availeth much”—your prayers are changing lives!

With heart- felt thanks,  
Carrie