City of Hope, Ntagacha, Tanzania

We pulled into the gates of the City of Hope (COH) and immediately received a warm welcome by the many children who swarmed our van, shaking our hands and offering to carry our bags. If our van ride hadn’t taken longer than expected we would have been greeted by the children’s welcome song. For other visitors that come through the COH the children gather outside the visitor’s center and sing “Welcome Visitors”.

After getting settled, our group was given a tour of the land by Tenzi, Dr. Cha-Cha’s and Regina’s daughter. We saw the children’s library, dining hall, banana fields, and then walked up the road to the medical clinic.

The recently completed medical clinic treats mainly malaria and yellow fever patients. The clinic (run by Dr. Ben) is open to the villagers nearby as well as those at COH. The clinic has several rooms for patients who need to be treated overnight.

Afterward the tour of the clinic, our group had a chance to interact with the children as they jump roped, played games and sang songs. We then had dinner in the Guest House with Regina and Tenzi and Dr. Cha-Cha welcomed us, thanking us for visiting despite his back injury.

The school was on an intersession break. Therefore, only the orphans who lived permanently at the COH were on premises. The children were busy playing “football,” carrying maize in from the cornfields, working in the “shamba” or field, sweeping, and collecting water from the nearby stream used for cooking, cleaning and washing their clothes.

I was traveling with the group from NPC from Nairobi to the City of Hope and then stayed for an additional three weeks at the CofH. The day Marilyn and John, my Dad and Katy and Rita and Carol left, the group was invited to attend a church service that took place in one of their classrooms.

Songs and praises to God filled the room while the students mostly lead the service – most of which were in Kiswahili. After each hymn, a new group of students came up and sang praises to the Lord. A small Sunday school lesson was lead by the mission team present before ours. They translated a passage from the bible and preformed a small skit explaining how God can be seen in many ways that represent his presence among us and guides us even if he himself cannot be seen. I believe we all sensed God’s presence especially among the children at the COH.
The children's home started four and a half years ago with only forty children. The chiefs and elders of the local tribes help to select the children that now live at the COH.

The school today enrolls children beginning at age 5 in Nursery, Pre-unit (Kindergarten) through Class 7 with a total of about 400 students.

It was amazing to hear Regina's story of how the City of Hope started with Dr. Cha-Cha's vision. So much has been accomplished and more is yet to come. COH has even helped form a peace between the tribes in the area, and the President of Tanzania made an appearance at the opening of the children's dorms!

During my time at the COH, I had a chance to immerse myself in their culture; assisting in the classroom once school was in session, carrying corn in from the fields, and collecting water while singing along with the children to some of their favorite songs. I got to see just how hard they work and how strong their spirit is for God. I've never seen such happy children.

A separate building houses seventy-four of the COH boarding students. I helped work with the Darien team, along with Cliff Van Voorhees, painting the boarding students' bunk rooms and hallway.

Written by Madeline Rahe
July 29, 2013