

July 17, 2009

Jambo (Hello) from Tanzania,

Kesho is your Swahili word of the day which means “tomorrow”. We finished all of our construction site work today, so we will not be going to the site tomorrow. Our current plans are to walk to the market in the morning, visit the local wood carvers and see Sam the batik artist at his studio/home/neighborhood. This will be a treat for those that have not really visited a neighborhood in Tanzania other than Mailisita.

Construction/Site Activities

Well, we achieved our goal today. We reached the ceiling with two of the walls that we have been working on all week. For the week we have moved 3,000 bricks from the ground floor to the first floor. In total we moved 16,500 pounds of concrete or 82.5 tons of bricks, an unknown number of bags of sand to make undungo (mortar) and have filled in more cracks in brick walls than we can count.

We finished the work week with a tradition that we started last year. When we finish our work on the last day, we buy enough beer and soft drinks for all the construction workers on site. We all clink our beer bottles together and toast our work for the week. This year the site supervisor, Aloysi gathered all of his workers together and they all said thank you in English. We truly have a close working relationship with the work crew on site.

Some of the hardest workers of the week were the carpenters on site. They have constructed over the last week forms on the floor above us for the beams for the roof. From where they started earlier this week to where they were today when we left the site is amazing when you look at the structure. I will try to get some pictures on the website next week where you can see the intricacies of this structure and how they molded these forms out of the used forms from the previous floors. Like I mentioned earlier this week, nothing is wasted on this site.

The final scene leaving the site is what I call the exchange of the shoes. All of the workers work in flip-flops or some type of rubber sandals. We even see some working barefoot. On the other hand, we have work boots or some type of hiking shoe which we work in all week. Each year, some of us end up leaving in socks and this year was no exception.

Kids Program at the Kindergarten- a Note from Susanne Taylor

This morning the children jumped out of their seats and started singing as soon as we walked into the room. The teacher immediately lost control of the room as they greeted us.

We started the day by working with pipe cleaners making bracelets, head bands and necklaces, but the children really wanted eye glasses made from pipe cleaners. This tradition was started three years ago on our first trip to Mailisita.

We also took a class picture. After we had all 77 children arranged for the picture, we had to ask the children to remove their 'glasses.'

Recess today started traditionally with balls and jump ropes and then we brought out the parachutes! This has always been a favorite of the children. The screaming was nonstop! They were very inventive with the games they created with the parachutes. I think there were some very tired children in Mailisita this week.

We had decorated the classroom wall with paper stick figures with the children's photos as the head. After their daily porridge, the children took theirs home along with a handful of pipis (candy). There were many smiles as pipi and photos are a big treat for them. Even the parents or guardians were impressed with the photos.

I have unfortunately neglected until now to introduce the Libertyville girls visiting Tanzania and working with the children of Mailisita. I am very impressed with their ability to jump in and work with the children (it is not easy to work with children when you are speaking two different languages). They took ownership of the activities and were very inventive and flexible, both essential to the success of our time with children.

Lauren Clatch (the Clatch girls are from Mettawa) recently graduated from Vernon Hills and is headed to Washington University in St. Louis to play soccer and study. She established a special bond with Silvano, the teacher's son. Rachel Clatch will be a junior at Vernon Hills. She is a gifted artist and was very helpful with the crafts for the children (sorry we didn't get the face painting this year). Ally Clatch will be a freshman at Vernon Hills this year. She really wanted to bring Happy home with her but I think we have convinced her that she will not fit in her suitcase. The Clatch girls were essential to the undungo supply and brick laying. They will be applying for their union cards when they return to the states.

Sarah Coughlin is the daughter of Dan and Joanne Coughlin of St. Joseph's parish. She will be a senior at Libertyville this year. She was very helpful with the children and also the star carrying the 55 pound bricks to the second floor of the construction site. She also brought a whole suitcase full of flip flops for the children at Mailisita.

Abby Johnson is my niece from Atlanta, Georgia. She will be a sophomore at Marist. I'm thrilled that she could come with us this year. I'm expecting her to write a beautiful novel about her experiences in Africa. Lauren Taylor is on her third trip to Tanzania and has helped the girls with their Swahili. She loves to spend time with the children and really lights up when around them.

At the beginning of this trip, I was asked why I have come to Africa so often. I have to say that I really enjoy sharing this experience with others. Each has their moment when they realize why their African trip is so special.

What is on tap for tomorrow?

Tomorrow is shopping day in Moshi. We will walk to market in the morning, find a place for lunch and then visit Sam the batik artist. Right now we are trying to figure out whether we want to try to venture out for dinner tomorrow night. On Sunday, we will go to Mass at Mailisita where we will have a special celebration Mass. The excitement after the Mass is truly a special time for all that make the trip to Mailisita. I do not want to tell you too much about it in case some day you make the trip to Mailisita.

This is my final note from Moshi. We head to the airport on Sunday night for the journey (safari) home. We all should be back in Libertyville by late afternoon Monday. I hope you have enjoyed the updates and have shared them with family and friends. If you want to make the trip next year, start planning now to be with us when we return to continue to bond our community with the community of Mailisita. In the meantime, please keep this community in Tanzania in your prayers because they are praying for us back in America everyday. Asante Sana.

Farewell from the community of Mailisita Parish!

Kwaheri (Good Bye) from the happy 13 in Moshi
From Moshi/Mailisita
Nathan Partain

Those that made the trip to Moshi/Mailisita in 2009

Dave Braun
Laura, Lauren, Ally, and Rachel Clatch
Dan and Sarah Coughlin
Nathan and Matthew Partain
Steve Richards
Susanne and Lauren Taylor
Susanne Taylor's niece Abby Johnson