

Twin Cities Refugee Outreach

Sarah Miller shares experiences from the Northwood Refugee Outreach trip this summer:

Dunia and her six children had been in the USA only one month when we delivered furniture to them. In their eyes I saw the rekindling of lost hope, at least in the eyes of the younger ones. I heard recently that children in poverty stop dreaming about future possibilities for their lives around the age of twelve. Maybe that explains the sadness and despair I saw in the eyes of Dunia's oldest son who is nearing twelve years of age. Communicating with words was difficult because the family doesn't speak English yet. Another Somali friend, Deqa, and her children teamed with us in this delivery. They were such an encouragement to us and to Dunia with their enthusiasm, cheerfulness and language assistance. When we finished the unloading and furniture assembly we gathered for a little relaxation and enjoyed one another's presence over Somali tea. Please pray for Dunia and her six children as they adjust to their new life here in America. Pray too for the restoration of dreams and hope in their hearts.



Pray that they will experience personally the God who heals the brokenhearted.

Have you ever been in a worship service where everyone is praying and worshipping in another language? Sunday morning we participated in the small Bhutanese Fellowship that meets at Bethel Christian Fellowship in St. Paul. Though we didn't understand the spoken and sung words, we definitely sensed the presence of the Holy Spirit. And in the presence of the Holy Spirit we felt a unity and kinship with our Bhutanese brothers and sisters. One thing God challenges me with over and over again is the incredible faith of my refugee brothers and sisters. He did so again at this service when the pastor requested that a couple of our team pray for physical healing on behalf of several fellowship members. Suddenly I wasn't sure that I had faith in God's ability to heal. I was humbled and felt at a loss for words to pray. So

I prayed that God would heal them based on their faith, not mine, and for His honor and glory.

Sunday afternoon we played. That's right, we played. We had a scavenger hunt with Bhutanese children in an apartment complex occupied exclusively by refugees. Prizes were awarded and information about a summer kids club was distributed. We were surrounded by smiles and laughter, not only from the children, but also from some of the parents who watched. It was great fun. Through it God reminded us that these are His children and they are incredibly valuable to Him.

God often brings to mind Isaiah 58 and as I reflect on this weekend experience a few excerpts come to mind: "... share your food with the hungry ... provide the poor wanderer with shelter ... spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed ..."



Remember The Children

by Brice Shireman

When we think about Outreach, we think about reaching out to people groups across the globe. We think about serving men and women and meeting their physical and spiritual needs. But when we think about Outreach, do we also consider children's needs? Jesus had a heart for children, as is evident in the scriptures. In Matthew 19:14 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me. Don't stop them, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to people who are like these children."

Every summer Northwooders come together to create an atmosphere for the children that allows them to see the love of Jesus. Through Vacation Bible School I have seen the children positively touched by interactive skits, crafts, food, and games. The children are taken back in time to relive the bible stories and to really learn why we need Jesus. As part of our story time, we offer the ABCs about becoming a follower of Jesus (our forever friend). The angels in heaven must sing praises to the highest whenever one of his children comes to Him.

As we enter the fall season, our thoughts turn toward the beginning of a new school year. Each child gets excited about being with their friends, and meeting their new schoolteachers and Sunday School teachers. Next to parents, the teach-

ers can make a huge impact and be a positive influence in a child's life. Many volunteers help with lessons, fun crafts, sing-a-longs, audio-visual equipment, expressive skits, and pray for each child. In the children's ministry everyone gets super-charged being with the kids, and God uses all of us to accomplish His will.

Another way to reach out to children is to see the needs beyond our own back yards. For instance, there are many children around the world who are hungry. One way that I have been able to help these children is by participating in the Maple Grove food packing events. Last year Northwood church, Impact Lives, and the greater Maple Grove community worked side-by-side to pack 285,000 meals to help feed the children in Haiti. It is a great way for children to serve God.

Mother's everywhere work tirelessly to provide for their children's needs. The week before Mother's Day last year, my family and I were able to help serve a Mother's Day meal for some very special mothers and their families at Mary's Place (a transitional shelter). As I served food, I saw how the young children were also serving drinks and food to the families at the shelter. The children's faces were beaming as they served as Jesus would serve.

There are children in third world

countries that are looking for sponsors to share their love. I have the privilege each year to partner with Compassion International and present the Northwood community with information about children in need. I am humbled by Northwooders as they continue to bless and provide for children around the world by sponsoring 53 children through Compassion International.

These are ways that the children at Northwood and around the world have personally touched me. I'm so glad that I am part of a church that makes it a priority to reach out and love kids. Together, we are the hands, feet and voice of Jesus calling children everywhere to come running into his arms!



Chiconautla 2011 - On a Mission for Relationships

This July, three Northwooders set out on an eight day mission trip to visit our sister church, Iglesia, Bet-lehem, in Chiconautla, Mexico. Even though this was not the first trip to Chiconautla for anyone on the team, it was amazing to see how God met both the team and the Chiconautla church family in fresh and new ways.

This year's team included Bret and Katie Deneson and Don Zietlow. Initially, we were all wondering if there would be any differences with a smaller team. However, everyone felt God's prompting to go. And looking back, we all commented how thankful we were to have taken part in doing something a little out of the ordinary.

On Sunday Bret, Katie and Don participated in Bet-lehem's three worship services, with Bret preaching and each of us sharing our faith stories. On Monday, the team spent the day helping with maintenance projects at the church, primarily repainting the interior of the church. Thanks to Bret's height, he got to climb to the top of the ladder to reach those hard to reach spots. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday were spent following roughly the same sched-

ule. While Bret spent the mornings co-facilitating a leader's conference with Bet-lehem's pastor Manuel Vivanco, Katie and Don ventured over to one of their daughter churches to assist with Vacation Bible School. After reconnecting for lunch, the team headed out in the afternoon to participate in street games and a brief message about Jesus designed to attract neighborhood children and their parents to hear about God and the church. Then in the evenings, the team attended home Bible studies, where each of us had an opportunity to share a devotional with the group. The trip concluded with a truly inspiring sunrise journey to the top of a nearby mountain, to watch the sun come up over Mexico City in a time of prayer and worship.

During the week our days began with a team devotional. One morning, we had a discussion around the question, "what truly is our purpose for being here?" After some reflection, we came to realize that part of the purpose for our trip was simply to "be"; to spend time with our brothers and sisters in Chiconautla. Another lesson we learned was that sometimes God calls us to follow Him without giving us details of where we are

going, what trials we may face along the way, or even the final outcome, and we simply need to be obedient to follow Him.

The most important part of this trip was the people; God's people who are brothers and sisters in Christ, and their friends and neighbors who have yet to make a decision for Christ. For Bret, it was the opportunity to share both at the church services and lead in the leader's conference, where he witnessed the hunger of these leaders, being blessed by the insights and encouragement he shared. For Katie and Don at Vacation Bible School, it was the warm smiles and hugs from new friends that wanted to know if we were coming back the next day to spend time with them. During the afternoon children's ministries, it was playing with the kids and helping to share the message of Jesus and witnessing tender souls praying to Him. At the home Bible studies it was the opportunity to encourage people like the mother struggling to maintain her job while she supported her children and grandchildren. By stepping out of our comfortable routine and our American expectations, we were each richly blessed.



Kenya - Building Friendships, Breaking Down Barriers

Back in August six Northwooders – Sarah Miller, Claudia Olson, LaVonne and Jason Dyer, Andy McKown and Mark Collier – went to Nairobi for a two-week mission trip. It was the third year Northwood has sent a team to Kenya and our mission was to serve Somali Refugees at a retreat the first week, and lead an Art Camp in the Mathare Valley the second week. Our team learned one important truth from this experience: building friendships breaks down barriers. Let me explain.

On this trip we faced two barriers. The first one was cultural. How do we even begin to relate to the Somali people and a culture far different from our own? How do reserved and unemotional Scandinavians relate to a Somali culture that is intense and emotional, with customs and traditions that are very unfamiliar to us? How do we interact or even communicate with Somali refugees with Muslim backgrounds, who have been forcefully displaced, facing death, torture, abuse, and abandonment along the way? How do we even comprehend what it means to now be facing persecution and death threats because of a decision to follow Jesus Christ? Where do we start? How did we get here? What do we have to offer? The answer is friendship. We sit and listen; we laugh



and we cry together. We play soccer and sing songs. We hear their stories and we tell our own. In doing this we become brothers and sisters and our fears disappear. The walls fall down!

The second barrier we faced was a physical and emotional one: the slum. Mathare is a dangerous, dark, dirty and oppressive place. How can we even find the strength to serve people there? We don't know if we can handle it all. There are sights, smells and sounds that almost overwhelm the senses. There is poverty, addiction, disease, and crime. It seems like all you can see is hopelessness. But then everything changes. You see the kids from Mathare Community Outreach; their smiles and wide eyes. You hear the songs of the Kariobangi Orphanage Choir: "I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free, His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he's watching me." Each day you go into Mathare and spend time with these kids, and the teachers and staff of the school. You hear their stories, eat their food, and learn their language. Then the students create art at the Art Camp; writing songs, taking photographs and shooting videos. You see the creativity, beauty and potential in these kids being unleashed! Each day you feel like you're coming home to be with family. You know what happens? The slum disappears!

So, if Northwood's 2011 Kenya team could offer you one piece of advice it would be this. There is a way to break through that barrier you are facing: make a friend on the other side. You'll be so glad you did!

OUTREACH CALENDAR



- **October 30 - November 6: ROW - Reach Out Week**
- **November 27: Worship and Prayer for Outreach Partners**
- **November - December: Hope Academy Christmas Adopt-a-Family**
- **January (Sunday TBD): 2012 Short-term Mission Trips Information Meetings**
- **February 25: Maple Grove Food Packing Event**
- **May 12: Mary's Place Mother's Day Brunch**
- **May 27: MN Teen Challenge Choir and BBQ**

OUTREACH GIVING

(Fiscal Year 9/2011-8/2012)

Budget YTD \$6327

Received \$6429

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