

# sac news

NEWSLETTER OF THE FUSN SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE  
First Unitarian Society in Newton, Massachusetts



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SPRING 2005

## FUSN travel to Zambia

**E**ighteen of us including nine teenagers visited Zambia for 18 days this August. We visited seven desperately impoverished urban squatter compounds in Lusaka and two very rural villages afflicted by drought in Southern Province.

We spent most of our time working in these communities. We saw things that were heart-wrenching and even brought some of us to tears. We saw indignities that made us angry, and, we saw things that were truly inspirational and an affirmation of the human spirit that we so often talk about at FUSN.

We agreed before leaving that we would have three objectives: to make friends – we certainly did that !; to bear witness to what we saw, and we are doing that with our lay service and this newsletter; and, to create some tangible useful projects for our Zambian friends; and we succeeded in that as well.

The trip was arranged in connection with Communities Without Borders (CWB), a non profit corporation founded by Peter Smith, Peter Lloyd, Al Jacobson and myself.

Through CWB, FUSN has been supporting educational costs for 30 AIDS orphans as well as other supplementary programs in the

## Portrait of Mary

**F**aces are fascinating to me, and the faces in Zambia were no exception. After I returned from our trip, the beautiful sad/happy faces of the Zambian people kept appearing regularly in my dreams. I know why. At our last visit to Ng'ombe compound, one woman looked me straight in the eye and said pleadingly, "Please don't forget us."

I want to tell you about one of the faces, Mary Tembo. I have a picture of her playing Frisbee, grinning. And another of her painting a wall in the school. Mary is a 45-year-old widow who has two children and is caring for her sister's child, an orphan. Taking in orphans is the norm in Zambia. We saw women who typically have five children or more and often have taken in additional AIDS orphans.

Mary is a remarkable woman and an



First Unitarian Society in Newton travelers and Zambian friends

Chawama Family Support Home for four years now. In addition, this year we built a new latrine, provided a sewing machine and material, provided a small library and taught English as a second language to the children.

I would also like to extend an invitation to you. Think about the different communities in which you live, in your work or school or neighborhood. Could any of these become partners for a community in Zambia? Would you like to champion such an initiative with our support? *by Dick Bail*



inspiration to me. She volunteers as a hospice worker for which she only gets a small stipend. One day, Mary allowed three of us to accompany her on her hospice rounds in the dusty Garden compound. As we began our trek around the Compound, I remember the ever-present smell of burning rubber and wood. Women in colorful chitenge's watched us as we walked through their yards. I knew this would be our only glimpse into the home-life of four people living with HIV / AIDS, and I was nervous. Not to worry. These people graciously welcomed us into their cramped one-room windowless huts. One patient told us he didn't have bus fare to go to the Hospice to get medications, so home visits are vital.

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## Action Projects

**Habitat for Humanity**  
Allan Hartman -332-5092

**Greater Boston Food Bank**  
Judy Zacek -969-7992

**Newton Food Pantry**  
Jackie Colby -527-2394

**Women's Lunch Place**  
Marion Bullitt - 965-0409

**Walk for Hunger**  
Lynn Holbein -244-8260

**Clothing Donations**  
Joellen Hawkins -527-7575

**UU Urban Ministry Inner City Youth Programs**

Michelle Walsh -738-3548  
Judy Friedman -325-9886

**Partakers prison visits and workshops**

Tim Dailey -277-8569

**Concord prison art project**  
Jacki Rohan -795-2415

**Mental Health Task Frc.**  
Nancy Stanton

-781 642-7284

**Environment Team**  
Beverly Droz -527-1916

**UUs Against Slavery**  
Barney Freiberg-Dale

-969-7339

**Coalition for Strong UN**  
Nancy Wrenn -969-2758

**20/20 Vision**  
Peter Smith -233-6071

**UU Service Committee**  
Karen Lein -332-3316

**Fair Trade Coffee**  
Mike Arnott -868-7591

## Portrait of Mary

(continued from page one)

The hospice trains people like Mary to be care-givers, providing a listening ear *and* much needed anti-retroviral drugs that keep people alive. As I sat through the home visits, I felt hot and claustrophobic, yet was astounded at the gentleness with which Mary tended to her patients. And for all her caring, Mary does this work—uncomplaining—as a volunteer.

Mary told us she wants to go to college, but cannot afford it. She has so little in terms of material goods, yet her compassion and spirit fills me with a hope that I might live up to her ideals. This is what I was left with: the indomitable spirit of the Zambian people, many of whom lack clean water and food, and have little hope of good jobs that could move them to a better place. They struggle. They survive. Their faces stay with me.

by Judy Friedman

## Miraculous recovery

We visited the best teaching hospital in Zambia. It was possibly the biggest emotional blow of the trip. Our guide was Sam, in his 6th year of medical school, and one of the most interesting and passionate people I have met. He led us to the malnutrition ward with the sickest children I had ever seen.

There were four sections in the ward and as a child gets better, he or she moves to the next section. The first section was for kids who had just been admitted and needed to be stabilized in order to keep from dying.

Once the infants had been stabilized they moved up to the second section of the ward. Here they were given small amounts of food repeatedly during the day because that was all they could digest. Some of the kids here were crying, which made Sam absolutely gleeful since, he told us, it meant they had the energy to do so. To reach the third section of the ward, a child had to reach the desired weight of the ward. Children were crying but also reacting to their environment. Babies' heads followed us as we walked by. The last section was for kids very close to being able to leave. To do this, babies had to gain back 80% of their body weight. It was amazing to see the transformation between the children in the first section and these children. They were healthy, crying, crawling infants, responding to things around them. I asked Sam how long this whole process took. "Two weeks," he told me. That simple. Two weeks and your life had been saved.

by Lily Olson

## Shoulders, Knees, Toes

The Zambian children came through the door. They quickly formed a line and stood, waiting for their turn, each one looking toward the gray wall as the camera flashed again and again.

"What's her name? Daniel? No? What was it? Sorry, I didn't catch that."

One by one they were guided to a small, green plastic chair where they sat silently, their hands quiet in their laps, waiting for our questions.

"So how old is this one, eight, seven. Ok."

Many girls seemed to have dressed up for the occasion. The boys wore simple, dirty clothes, a t-shirt, a pair of shorts, flip-flops.

We first asked their names.

"Elizabeth, Prudence, Jane, Hannah." They whispered each word to themselves, and then glanced up hopefully into our faces to see if we had heard. We smiled, but their words were often lost, and we struggled to understand, asking again and again.

We then asked how old they were. Most were six, maybe seven years old, and then there were a few older ones, maybe nine or ten years. They were all very small, but they seem strong in thin dark bodies.

Finally we asked what it was they wanted to be when they grew up. "Housemaid. Teacher. Housemaid. Bus Driver. Soldier. Teacher. Soldier. Housemaid. Doctor." And then the flash of the camera. After each child was registered, they stood quietly at the edge of the doorway, watching and waiting for something more. We folded up our lists and tucked our cameras into back packs, and then stood, smiling at the children in the doorway, not speaking. "We should play a game, we have some time, we should do something before we go." We waved them back into the room, and again they came tentatively, watching us as they formed a circle. They watched again, waiting for instruction. "Head. Shoulders. Knees. And Toes."

As we began chanting, they looked on at us silently. Then slowly they began to speak. "Head. Shoulders. Knees. And Toes. Head shoulders knees and toes." The chant grew louder in the small room, and their smiles grew wider, revealing their brilliantly white teeth in the dark room. And I smiled too.

When I walked into that class-room at the beginning of the day, we were coming to see them. When I stepped onto the bus that afternoon, we were we. And we really were. It was as simple as "head, shoulders, knees and toes."

by Sam Watts



Zambian children made friends easily with our nine teenage travelers

## Editor's Note:

We see this newsletter as a place where anyone at FUSN might, space permitting, share a meaningful activity. If you're involved in something you'd like others to know about, contact Ros Winsor (617 566-5215 or [roswinsor@aol.com](mailto:roswinsor@aol.com)) or Peter Smith (617 233-6071 - [psmith@igc.org](mailto:psmith@igc.org))