

sac news

NEWSLETTER OF THE FUSN SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE



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Sent to the First Unitarian Society in Newton three times each year

October, 2008

FUSN's Zambia trip volunteers tell stories at Nov. 9 service

This year 32 people traveled to Zambia to volunteer services with our community partners in supporting the education of AIDS orphans in Zambia. There were two trips—one in June and one the first two weeks in July.

Melissa Anderson, Richard Bail, Becca Kimball, Michele Kaufman, Gordon Moriarty, Helen Smith, Ros Winsor and I represented FUSN on the trip. In addition,

we were joined by self-funded volunteers from two teaching teams and three other churches. We look forward to telling you more of our trip stories at a special service on Sunday, November 9.

A "Community Collection" will be taken at this service for FUSN's work in Zambia. Please make out your generous check to Communities Without Borders. *Thanks!*
by Peter Smith



Four Newton North High School girls with some of the Zambian children they taught

Despite hunger, deprivation—hope still thrives

What exactly does one expect traveling to a Third World country? Poverty, starvation, corruption, but, least likely of all, hope.

Our last night in Zambia tied all three of these themes together. Communities Without Borders had recently bought a new schoolhouse for the Ngombe Compound in Lusaka, Zambia's capital city.

Members of our group as well as members of the Ngombe community, gathered into the new schoolhouse to witness the finalization of this transaction. Crowded outside were curious Ngombe children, some with orange hair, a sign of malnutrition.

As the rest of us were waiting inside the schoolhouse for the vendor and the Society for Women Against AIDS in Zambia representative Dr. Nkanda Luo, five women stood up at the front of the room and began singing in their first language, Nyanja.

Although I could not understand what these women were singing, I could feel it.

They were so thankful for our help. It's very difficult to articulate all the emotion that was in their song. The emotion was so powerful that it gave me chills.

Their song lasted for 15 minutes, and it ceased only when the signing of the documents began.

The actual signing of the documents took only a few seconds, but the speeches that followed lasted for about 20 minutes.

Dr. Richard Bail, a FUSN member and founder of Communities Without Borders, spoke about maintaining the building and Luo stressed the importance of not taking advantage of the new building and our generosity.

She made it clear that she would put any people who stole from us in jail. Her talk of stealing completely changed the formerly light-hearted atmosphere.

Her threats reminded me once again of the awful state that every compound of Zambia is in.

Somehow that one night managed to sum up my entire trip. Despite all the poverty and famine, organizations like Communities Without Borders give people hope. Sometimes there are obstacles, but the idea of helping the impoverished Zambians drives everyone to push forward.

by Melissa Anderson

Editor's note:: This article is adapted from one originally printed in the Newton North newspaper, The Newtonite, Friday September 12, 2008.

Action Projects

Communities Without Borders
Michelle Boudreau - 781 894-7350

Environment Team
Eric Olson -558-6866

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

Partakers prison visits and workshops
Ros Winsor -566-5215

Concord Prison Art Project
Jacki Rohan -795-2415

Mentally Health Task Fce.
Nancy Stanton
-781 642-7284

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

Don't get left out !

Four FUSNites missed the initial chance to work on Habitat for Humanity's first house in Newton by signing up too late. E-mail Allan Hartman now to be one of the first for the next weekend work session: ahartman@comcast.net



In Lusaka: Michele Kaufman reads to 10- and 11-year-olds

Working with orphans a key part of program

When we first entered the gates into the Chawama Community Pre-school, a crowd of children surrounded us, reaching out their hands to grab ours and welcome us. This school, which enrolls more than 200 children, was where I taught for the next week. Most of their parents have died of HIV/AIDS.

A special education teacher from Lexington and I arrived at 9 am and taught and played with the children until noon. For a week these children wore the same outfit to school each day. While some had malnutrition, others also had diseases that needed treatment. They were the happiest children I have ever met and were so eager to learn. Yet they barely had anything. We started the day off singing songs as a group, such as "Head, shoulders, knees and toes."

We started to teach the alphabet and about animals. They never wanted to put the crayons and books down. It was astounding how captivated they were. This trip was the greatest experience I have ever had and has inspired me to take action. We can make a difference and help balance out the unfair distribution of wealth. *by Michele Kaufman originally printed in the Newtonite newspaper*



Becca Kimball with school teacher Nina (left) and women from the Ngombe community where Becca taught children

Teaching in Zambia

Our trip had two groups of professional teachers, who provided some well received weekend workshops for their Zambian counterparts, a couple of carpenters (one of whom masquerades as a lawyer—Gordon Moriarty) who built carrels for computers at a resource center. Others, like myself, lent a hand at several English language classes our teachers led at local "community pre-schools."

I also measured women for reading glasses donated at FUSN, using a chart from the internet. Our group was frequently welcomed with song and dance at the school, and people seemed grateful for our help.

I spent several days at various community schools helping children learn their ABC's. Although we'd all traveled with extra suitcases filled with books, paper, crayons, toys, etc.), we were warned not to overwhelm the kids with too much. It was a pleasure and a pain to see children's faces light up when given a piece of paper and crayon. And how eager they were to show us their pictures.

The students were hungry for learning, and we yearned to have one-to-one time with some, but that was not to be. At the school in Chwama (the "community" with which FUSN is paired) there were about 85 kids packed inside two rooms no bigger than 12 feet x14 feet and a dirt play area outside with only slightly more space, a spill over for the children and also a place where local women sat stringing beads to sell at nearby stalls. When things got too rowdy in the classroom, the local teacher would strike up a song, some English hand-me-down like "London Bridge is falling down," or a lively Christian hymn and order was restored.

adapted from a report by Ros Winsor
Editor's note: Ros provided more than 40 women with glasses. Many of them struggle to see the tiny beads that they string and the glasses make it possible to do their work. Without the necklaces and bracelets that they craft, they would have no income for food and clothing both for themselves and the children for whom they are caretakers.

20/20 opportunity

No meetings! Make a difference advocating nationally for peace and the environment! Join other FUSN folks who do this in just 20 minutes a month from home. Call Peter Smith 617 233-6071.

Thanks to our recyclers!

We appreciate our student recycling volunteers. Once a week Mellissa Sullivan takes the paper from the copier room and Will Goldsmith has been taking the bottles & cans from the kitchen to their green bins at home. Will has finished his duty and we are looking for a new recycler. Call 617 233-6071



Come to Social Action meetings

We meet on the first Sunday of the month after coffee hour. We would love to have you stop in, have soup and just listen. . . or join us!

If you have a social action project and want to get support from FUSN, you are welcome to come and see if there are others who want to join you in pursuing your idea.

Editors' Note:

We see this newsletter as a place where, space permitting, anyone at FUSN might share a meaningful activity. If you're involved in something you'd like others to know about, contact Peter Smith (617 233-6071 - psmith@igc.org)

**Stand High
Stand United
Explorer's Club
Saturday mornings,
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

For more information about Stand High or the mentoring program, contact Judy Friedman 617 325-9886 or e-mail: judyfried@verizon.net