



Volunteer Summer 2007 Weekly Update Highlights

From VS Ghana – July 5, 2007

Akpealeh Friends and Family!

Hello from the village of Likpe Mate. As we near the end of our second week, we're proud to say that we are a little tanner and a little stronger than last week!

Our immersion into our village has exceeded all expectations. We feel pretty popular amongst the locals, most of whom know our names and greet us with salutations of "Allo Sistah/Brotha (insert your child's name here)" those names that are harder to pronounce have been replaced by traditional Ghanaian ones. Rachel was recently dubbed 'Kola' and Aryeh is called 'Big Man Kofi.' - catchy huh? Still, some children prefer shouts of "Abruni! Abruni!" meaning white man! white man!

Our typical days have looked sort of like this: 7 am wake up (by the roosters outside our windows) and a hardy breakfast before we hit the work site at 8. We're pleased to say work has been picking up, and we've begun to see our progress. The foundation of the bungalow has been leveled, thanks to our work site all stars, Gali and Jacob, and we're proud to report that we've made 1000 40 lb. cement bricks ...only 3000 more to go! Work ends at 11 at which time we return home for a traditional Ghanaian lunch. Our favorite meals include: red-red (a bean stew) and fried plantains, banku (to be honest- we don't actually know what is in this- but we assure you its delicious!) and an endless supply of rice. Our afternoons give us free time to read, play cards/soccer/"volley", and hang out with villagers.

Next week we are excited to begin assisting teachers in the village's primary and secondary schools. There we will have the opportunity to help teach math, science, and English for a few hours a day to kids ages 6-14. Rachel, Hannah Fine, and Ezra even get the opportunity to teach a French class!

After our early dinner around 5:30, the children flock to our porch for dancing, singing, coloring, etc. This past week, Sarah helped teach the kids the dance to the "Macaraina" and Becca and Hannah Roodman taught the kids how to play 'Tic Tac Toe.' In return, the children taught us Ghanaian duck-duck-goose!

Our weekend brought us a relaxing Shabbat complete with singing z'mirot and doing a kabbalat shabbat service. Sunday morning, we ventured out to the mountain that overlooks our village. Our 2 our hike to the top brought us into the clouds where we stood and

danced with the community members that accompanied us on our journey. After our hour of celebration we descended only to enter a field of coco trees. Adam helped bring home some coco pods which led to an interesting new food tasting experience. And no, coco beans don't taste like chocolate. Sunday night some of us visited the secondary schools church and were fascinated by the beautiful singing and dancing by the students clad in their colorful patterned religious garb. Michelle joined in the dancing and encouraged us to participate.

Other highlights include: Professor Ado Fenning from the University of Ghana came to Likpe Mate to give us an extensive 3 day lesson on the history of Ghana. As a group we have also begun our discussions on social justice and the ethical dilemmas on the subject of sustainable development in third world countries. We also find ourselves engaging in these discussions in casual conversation.

On a lighter note, we took a day trip to Hohoe where we bought some snacks and splurged on some "minerals" (a.k.a. soda pop). Micah bought some pants since his bags had still not arrived. Fortunately, Micah and Sarah's luggage came today and they are rejoicing by doing personal fashion shows with their new clothes. Esther on the other hand has been a real trooper having gone without her bag for 17 days (but who's counting). We'll keep you posted when hers arrive.

Today, the 17th of Tamuz, Esther, Adam, Ethan, Ezra, and Stephanie are fasting to commemorate the breaching of the walls surrounding the temple (a prelude to its destruction on Tisha Ba'av). Lastly, Greg and others are excited for our 4 day trip to Cape Coast on Thursday where we will visit the salve-holding castles from colonial days.

We hope you guys back home are doing well - we love and miss you.

Peace from sub-Saharan Africa,
Becca, Hannah R, and Rachel