

El-shadai April 2007 Update

Hello everyone! There's a lot happening at the El-shadai Family Foster Home and so this is a lengthy newsletter (8 pages)! For the most part I've copied and pasted from e-mails so you can "hear" from people in their own words. I start with a lengthy update from the Director, Stephen Wante and end with some potential future projects. As always, let me know if you have questions, concerns, or comments! Thank you for your support of these amazing children!

Emma Young,
Kids Worldwide Volunteer Coordinator

Notes from the Director, Stephen Wante

Normally Stephen and I send many short e-mails and I call El-shadai about once a week. However, I've received an extensive letter from Stephen and want to share most of it with you. I'll divide it into subheadings, but very little editing is being done beyond this.

Gratitude for KWW & The Volunteers

[From S. Wante's e-mail] It began like a dream when KWW expressed their desire to send volunteers to the El-Shadai family foster home after writing us. We are really grateful to KWW for the vision of creating an atmosphere which allows the many people from developed countries to have access to organizations, foster homes, orphanages, and schools where they can offer their needed services as volunteers.

We are excited to report that we have received many volunteers from different countries. We are grateful to God for all the services these volunteers have rendered to the children and the women of the community which has created a positive impact.

Transport from the Airport to El-shadai

Stephen greets you at the airport and escorts you to the home, but the expense of travel can burden a tight budget, so volunteers pay for their transport. Costs depend on whether transport is private (a "special hire", what we think of as a taxi or rental car) or public (buses), with public being the least monetarily expensive but with many stops/starts, no scheduled times for pick-up and drop-off, and with many others being transported as well (public transport is packed tight!) as potential negatives. Here's are Stephen's specifics:

[from S. Wante's e-mail] Collecting the volunteer at the airport will depend on the means of transport they prefer to use according to the time of arrival and availability. The costs are reflected below:

1) -A "special hire" from Jinja to Entebbe-	30,000 shs
-fuel for the whole journey-	<u>55,000 shs</u>
Total:	85,000 shs

2) Public transport

-Entebbe airport to Entebbe tax park (special)	20,000 shs
-Matatu from Entebbe to Kampala	3,000 shs
-Luggage (small)	2,000 shs
-luggage (big)	5,000 shs
-Costa from Kampala to Jinja	3,000 shs
-luggage	5,000 shs
-Jinja to Bugembe (special)	<u>5,000 shs</u>
Total:	43,000 shs

The above costs are only for the visitor. It is good for them to make a choice which is convenient for them. However, it is important for those who arrive at 8:30 am to know that it will be difficult to get a public vehicle that leaves Jinja by 5:00 am in order to arrive in Entebbe on time. Volunteers are free to choose the kind of transport they need to use for their convenience.

Donations & Gifts

[From S. Wante's e-mail] I recommend volunteers bring with them items they feel are important for the children and the home. Things such as clothes, school bags, shoes-especially for school, school textbooks for secondary and primary school, games, musical instruments for the family choir, simple first aid instruments, and other things they feel like bringing.

On the issues of gifts, some volunteers have been giving them out to different children at different times, which I think can be inappropriate. These volunteers may not know who has more than whom. This may tend some children to bend their relationships with some volunteers which is not healthy in the home. I suggest that it would be important that volunteers shares with me and we set a time when together we can give out gifts to the children. I believe this will create a sense of equality in receiving gifts and promote good relationships with the volunteers and friendly environment in a home..

Suggestions for Volunteers

[From S. Wante's e-mail] Volunteers should feel free to discuss with me if there is a change in mind in what they want to do. In some circumstances, volunteers should try to be flexible. Some volunteers have played games with the children, which is good for their health and mind to grow and I also suggest that volunteers talk with the children more. The children have gone through hard times in the past and I believe this will help deal with certain issues in their life.

It's our humble request that volunteers communicate where they are going and what they want to do as this will give a sense of security and responsibility in the home. I also think that it's helpful if volunteers encourage children who the volunteer finds at home to do what the children feel they should do rather than discouraging the children from wholesome activities and doing what the volunteer's interests are.

Current Challenges facing the El-shadai Foster Family

[from S. Wante's e-mail]

Medical: Since most of the children went through abuse since their childhood, they have developed diseases which were not given attention and treatment. Therefore they need treatment to lead healthier lives. The children must be taken frequently to medical experts who are very expensive in our country. We have been able to give them some treatment but still it is very expensive. The children need eye, dental, spinal, and chest checkups. Some few have been checked up for dental such as Tabitha Winnie, Tabitha Damali, Caleb, Emma, and this has cost about 50,000 per child and more still need to be checked. These include Joan, Fred, and Frank.

Accommodation: As for now we are renting and we have been able to maintain the house and keep it as a good environment for the children. The owner is always threatening us to leave the house, but I have always gone to the landlady who has always been positive. However, this gives an environment of insecurity as we cannot tell what may happen tomorrow. It is always our prayer that we get our own house. We especially thank Srijana and her friends for spearheading the fundraising for the house. [See <http://www.friendsofelshadai.com> for more information] The volunteers who may wish to be supportive for the fundraising of the house are more than welcome.

[Emma's note: Stephen has negotiated a one-year lease with only a few thousand shillings per month increase in rent. However, a year is not much time to purchase land and build another home. The lack of a permanent home for the children is continual cause for the children's insecurity and concern.]

Education: Many of the children were not given a good education and it was not valued by their parents and society. They need schools that can understand them, help them to improve their grades, and deal with their social inferiority. Because education has tremendously changed, Kenyans and Tanzanians are flocking to Ugandan schools. It has become expensive and competitive. This has meant that for the children to get better grades they need to join better high schools which are quite expensive. Yet, they are necessary for the children to get a competitive position and especially for sciences which the government has made by law to be compulsory. Most of the schools are not equipped with laboratory equipment for science experiments. This gives less opportunity for those who are in average schools with no equipment to get better grades. These are some of the ideas I have in mind:

As for primary level the children can always go to the nearby private schools that can offer them the proper attention and guidance.

With secondary I hope to place them in Boarding schools which charge fair but large school fees and perform well in academics. Because it is quite expensive to get good schools I think the idea of sponsorship is good. A child could get a sponsor or volunteer willing to provide for school fees. This will help them to focus on studies as they will know that everything is taken care of.

As for university a child may need more than one sponsor because University is very expensive. Each sponsor could address different issues, for example tuition, accommodation, research, and upkeep for one child. This gives them a sense of comfort and hope to study and accomplish their goals. Then they are led to change issues around their families and also are given opportunities for a better job.

Isaac's experience, for example, has shown that if there was not support for him then it would be very hard for the family. Though there are still other challenges like research these issues can always be addressed.

Transport: This has been another challenge, especially in situations when children get sick in the night and you need to call for a special hire which is very expensive. I believe if we could have our own car this would help reduce costs and also help to transport volunteers from the airport as they would only need to pay for fuel. This will help when transporting children back to their respective schools as the term begins. Also during the time of taking them to school for the boarding section and visitations of the students at schools this would be useful.

[Emma's note: Stephen and I have talked about the need for the home to have motorized transport for emergencies. While a car is the ideal, we both recognize saving for a permanent and stable home is of the highest priority than buying a car to transport volunteers for example. We've discussed a potential alternative of purchasing a motorbike/cycle for the home. This costs about 4 million shillings less than a car, upkeep would cost less, and it would be on hand for emergencies.]

Current Volunteers

Ashley Thur of Canada left in March. She was a fantastic and energetic volunteer who provided much needed continuity between long term volunteers coming and going. Bethany Richards of the United States has been alone at the project since Ashley left, but will be joined very soon by Jamie Davis of the United States (currently based in the UK), potentially Sherry Berger of the United States who has suggested a Portrait Project detailed later in this e-mail, and potentially Deborah Muntner who is in Uganda and wants to volunteer, but we haven't received an application yet. Following is Ashley's last update, an update from Bethany, and a bit of news from Jamie.

Ashley Thur of Canada and Suggested Donations

[From Ashley Thur's e-mail] When I last spoke to you on the phone, Stephan's phone ran out of batteries and we got cut off. but I had mentioned that Lexa, Sam and I brainstormed some ideas about some things a volunteer could bring to add to your list.

OUR LIST:

1. Computer 'things': A new laptop [so the kids can use Stephen's current one to learn how to type], a printer, a memory stick, etc. His current computer [for issues of compatibility] is an IBM Think Pad with Windows 95/NT, and it has one USB port.
2. Sharp knives!! [i know that's already on the list, but we thought its need should be highlighted.. hehe]
3. Dish towels/dish clothes
4. Bracelet making supplies (especially if the volunteer knows how to make a different kind of bracelet, the kids would love to learn)
5. Broom/mop
6. VCR/VCD movies/DVD player and movies... obviously not a necessity, but they would love it!
7. CD's
8. Socks, underwear (boys, especially)
9. Closed-toed shoes/dress shoes
10. Basketballs, footballs, volleyballs, etc.
11. Sunglasses, ballcaps
12. A hand juicer
13. Textbooks (physics, chemistry, biology, math, etc)
14. Dictionaries
15. A tent (this was Sam's suggestion...he said sometimes they go on trips where they would use it?) [Note from Emma- I haven't heard of this 'need' before either! Not sure...]
16. Bed sheets, blankets
17. Raincoats
18. Pens, pencils, calculators, printer paper
19. Board games [with as few loose pieces as possible, and maybe bring extra dice] Some good ideas would be: Trouble, Snakes and Ladders, Twister, Yahtzee
20. Simple puzzles [not too many pieces]
21. Math flashcards!
22. Paint brushes (for art and for the house)
23. Tools like: hammer, brick trowel, screwdriver, etc.
24. A fan (the kitchen gets so hot, it'd be nice if they could have a fan to cool them off)
25. Coloring books, crayons, pencil crayons
26. Bath towels
27. Backpacks!!! (school bags)

Also, apparently Joelle brought them some nice-smelling dish soap which they loved, so that might be a nice little gift for them too.

A lot of the kids have pictures, but they have no photo albums to put the pictures in, so they tend to get damaged or lost. I know you can get little photo albums really cheap at the dollar store, so that might be a good thing for people to bring as well.

Bethany Richards and the Current Volunteer Work

On Bethany's arrival we were both surprised to learn that Stephen had received a grant to hold a children's art exhibition and competition and wanted Bethany to lead the effort to organize it in about two weeks time! Wow- welcome to Uganda! Bethany was amazing; she dove right into the project, visiting local schools to publish the event and recruit young artists, and organizing the day's events at the youth center next to the Catholic Church. According to Stephen there were many entries and the day was a great success. It also introduced Bethany to many schools and she's been volunteering since. Here's excerpts from her recent e-mail:

[From Bethany Richard's e-mail] We had the art exhibition today, and it was a big success. Definitely room for improvements, but it was a good first time go. We were able to give 2- 80,000 ush awards and 2- 50,000 awards. So some kids got some much needed school fees. In organizing for the exhibition I was able to visit many schools and set up times each week I could come. I'm going to St. Florence twice a week and Good Heart once a week as of now. I'll be bringing some supplies with me that we can experiment with, I think it's going to be very fun, and it will be the first time some of these kids have even worked with paint or color.

As for work in El-Shadai, I've just been doing what needs to be done at the moment. I've taken some kids to the doctor, run errands for Stephen, typed up some things, helped with homework, etc. There's so much to be done with so many kids around, it's been challenging to know just what to do, but everyday I'm feeling more of a niche in the house.

Jamie Davis Arrives in April

Jamie is a friend of Srijana, who founded The Friends of El-shadai and volunteered last year. Jamie's the first second-generation volunteer! [From her recent e-mail] I'm bringing along a few things that Srijana wanted me to give to the children and I've gathered quite a large donation of clothes. Unfortunately most of them are for the girls though. Well, right now flurries of emotions are swirling through me, nervous, anxious, excited, etc. But, I'm really looking forward to meeting Stephen and the children and to assist them in any way I can. [Note from Emma: I know this exact feeling. And now my exact feeling is: I've got to get back; I miss them so!]

Future Volunteers

Sue from Australia arrives in May. She's an experienced nurse, consultant and manager. Nick and Laurie, a married couple from America, also arrive in May. Nick is experienced in construction and Laurie in social work. So, May is seeing some much needed skills arriving at El-shadai! Sue may be bringing a laptop and some medical supplies and Nick and Laurie are stocking El-shadai with requested books. Great donations in addition to their needed talents!

Update on the Children of El-shadai

In our last issue, we discussed some of the oldest children of El-shadai, so I wanted to focus this issue on the little ones!

Cesar

Cesar is attending school and getting much better in his English. Each of the volunteers has truly contributed to helping him succeed as he didn't start learning English until last year! Cesar apparently loves school, but he very much misses Isaac, who is attending university, as Isaac was an advocate and helper for Cesar in the home. Here's a picture taken by Catharine of Australia, a former volunteer, of Cesar with George in the cornfield out back of El-shadai:



Cesar and George



Gloria

Gloria

Gloria is becoming more confident and talking more with the volunteers from the beginning of their stay. As the only child not attending school, she's quite upset and wants to go to school very much! Here's a note from Bethany about Gloria: Gloria and I have some bonding time at home during the day. The other day she counted beads on my skirt all the way up to 20, which I thought was pretty amazing considering she doesn't go to school! That's a picture from Catherine above of Gloria.

George

George is certainly not amongst the littlest but an update is important as he is experiencing health problems and needs some future volunteer support! Ashley put the details in an e-mail and so I'm quoting from it here:

There was an expensive (non urgent) medical situation that I ran into with George the week I was leaving, so I couldn't really deal with it. I'll summarize the story as quickly and as best i can: George was always complaining of chest pain and shortness of breath, so we took him into Jinja to the al-shafa medical centre where the doctor (who seemed very knowledgeable) told us that George has a heart murmur. He said that he doesn't know the cause, but that sometimes if the cause is determined or if the specific qualities of the murmur are determined (or something to that extent) the murmur can be treated. Anyway, he said that you have to go to Kampala to get an echocardiogram done, which would give a better indication as to where exactly the murmur is located. When I was in Kampala before I left, I confirmed that this could in fact be done there-- they only have one machine and its at the Mulago Hospital.. no appointment is necessary, you just should get there before noon if you want to be seen, and the cost (for children 12 and under) is about \$60USD. I know a lot of volunteers do some fundraising before they go, and this might be something that someone could fundraise for.

Future Projects

Two people contacted the El-shadai Family Foster Home and/or Rejoice Outreach International through the Kids Worldwide website and each contact has led to a project proposal. These projects are conceptual now; it will be fantastic to see them come to fruition in the future!

Sherry Berger and the Portrait Project

Sherry Berger from the United States, who has extensive experience in fine arts and fundraising for international charitable projects, originally applied as a potential volunteer and will be arriving in Uganda quite soon. Sherry may not be staying at the project; however she has an amazing proposal to support the home! I'll let her explain the concept in her own words:

[From S. Berger's e-mail with slight editing] A fellow humanitarian, Ben Schumacher, founded an incredible organization called the "memory project". He has traveled throughout the world and takes photos of orphans/neglected children. He brings the photos back to the states and contacts artists to make a "portrait" of the photograph and then sends the artwork back to the child. Here's his mission statement:

"I founded the Memory Project in October, 2004, following the advice of a man in Guatemala. Having grown up in an orphanage, this young man did not have any pictures from his earliest years or any parents to share memories of his youth. Consequently, he felt that much of his childhood had been forgotten, and he shared this feeling with a group of university students working at the orphanage. As one of the students, I was very moved by his story, and I founded the Memory Project as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization after returning home. "

I love the idea so much because it is a way for folks here in the states to get involved, and most importantly, made aware of the issues around the world.

My proposal: Would El-Shadai be opened to me photographing the children? I will in turn bring the photographs back and contact professional artists to create a portrait. My idea is to take this a step further. I have an artist gallery here in Philadelphia where I can exhibit the work, and hold a reception to fundraise for El-Shadai. After the reception I will send all the funds raised, along with the portraits to El Shadai. I would be more than thrilled to do this if you are in agreement. I have a great deal of experience in this area, since every year I hold an art exhibition/fundraiser for charity, this could be the next one I focus on.

Here's Ben's website (He's worked with children in Uganda as well)

<http://www.thememoryproject.org/>

Also, here's the website to my art group "the no name art group" who contribute artwork every year to fundraisers www.nonameartgroup.com [End S. Berger's e-mail]

What a tremendous validation for the children to receive their own portrait! And to have monetary support as well is a cherry on top of the cake! I truly hope this project happens! I'm quite excited!

Karl Hankinson and Educational/Recreational Community Programs

Karl Hankinson from the United Kingdom traveled to Uganda and met with several groups, including SPAU (Single Parents Association of Uganda), USDC (Ugandan Society for Disabled children), and Rejoice Outreach International (the umbrella organization over El-shadai), as advanced preparation for setting up community educational programs through the medium of recreation in Uganda next year through a charity he is founding called Wannabeamazin'. He's in

Ghana now setting up similar programs as he proposes for Uganda. Here's some excerpts from his e-mail so you know about this great idea!

[From K. Hankinson's e-mail with some edits] We were very impressed with both the work you were doing, and the ideas that you shared with us, and we would love the opportunity to come and base our project with you in Bugembe, if you would be willing.

We would offer our assistance to you with your work, and the clinics you currently run, and in addition we would like to set up a range of educational, recreational and sports programmes for the children in the area. We would also bring with us a HIV awareness/HIV awareness project (the one I am off to Ghana to help set up) that uses football as a teaching tool to teach valuable life skills. That charity is called Africaid.

I'm in the process of setting up my own charity. Our aim is to offer some educational and recreational programmes for children, to give children something to do, and something to look forward to. In doing this, we want to run a project where we can combine the work of a few different charities working in Uganda. We would like to know if you would be open for us to come and work with you and alongside you in Bugembe. We cannot promise much money. We will do our best to fundraise, and would love to assist you to buy a centre to run the health and education programmes from, but if not we would come with a lot of hard work and passion to help. [End K. Hankinson's e-mail]

Programs providing health education and recreation for the children of Bugembe would be absolutely fantastic. Karl's experience and advanced preparation speak to his passion and dedication to this idea as well! Another project I'm hoping comes to fruition!