

Dr. MacCluskie and the CSU Kenya Dream Team

Project Update 21-2-2018

So much has happened since the last update, it is difficult to figure out where to begin! This newsletter is going to feature stories and pictures from as many of the Dream Team members as can add, since they have not only stories, but also tons more pictures than I do.....

Many American individuals, very important to me both personally and professionally, touched down on Kenyan soil at the beginning of February. The Dream Team (DT) arrived in waves over a number of days, and the pace of my Nairobi life went from about 15 mph to 80 in the blink of an eye! The icing on the cake was when David got here just two days before we set off on safari. We packed in so much activity that it took me literally days to get caught up with my rest since the DT returned to the U.S. Eric said to me one night, "You have *more* energy than....". Well, Eric, that energy flame finally flickered out when the last couple DT got on their plane and I slept for 10 hours straight the next night! There were many projects that got started once people were here, and I'm going to tell you a bit about both the work *and* the fun. This time, readers, you will get the added pleasure of hearing from the Dream Team Too.

The first week of February saw **Dr. King-White, Eric, and Dr. Michelle H. ("Miche")**, visiting a number of public and private schools, talking to students, teachers, and administrators about the non-academic challenges the students face, what mechanisms are in place to assist them with those challenges, and where the needs are. One of Dr. King-white's goals was establishment of professional relationships to facilitate her data collection for a needs assessment, as one of the preliminary steps in our providing services here. There are public, as well as many private schools here, some of which are boarding schools beginning at "Form 1" (1st grade), and some of which are day schools that provide transportation. The private schools often offer some scholarships but for the most part the parents of those students are either highly affluent or working their hands to the bones to get their children a good education. One very distressing aspect of Nairobi life are the huge "slums" which house thousands and

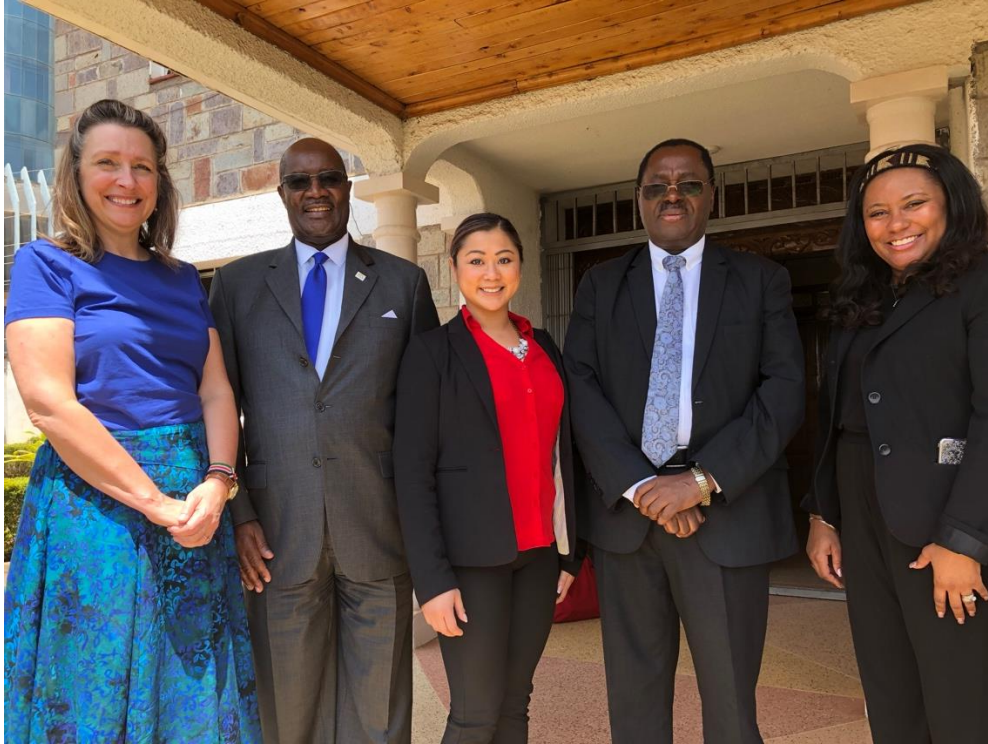
thousands of desperately poor people. The slum communities have their own socioeconomic system that consists of bartering and places of business just like any other community.

DAKOTA and others!

Also in that first week of February, **Dr. Stacey Litam, Michelle Mate, and Maggie Hess** visited the main psychiatric hospital for Kenya, where they interviewed staff, the psychiatrist, and toured the grounds. The focus of their conversations was upon establishment of contacts for Dr. Litam's data collection on topics related to forced labor, domestic violence, and the degree of support in the community.

STACEY and others!

Another high point in our first week was our meeting with Dr. David Ndeti. Dr. Ndeti is the founder and CEO of the African Mental Health Foundation, and he also is a psychiatrist on faculty at the medical school at the University of Nairobi.



Left to right: Dr. MacCluskie, Dr. Midamba (VC of KCA), Dr. Litam, Dr. Ndetei (CEO, African Mental Health Foundation), and Dr. King-White

Dr. Ndetei is not only close friends with Dr. Midamba, the Vice Chancellor (President) of KCA, he is probably the most prolific author of professional articles about the status of mental health disorders and services in Kenya. He was extremely knowledgeable about where things are and what needs to be done. To us it feels like divine providence that he happens to be so closely associated with Dr. Midamba, one of our gracious KCA hosts! Dr. Ndetei made the observation that distressingly, many aspiring researchers from Europe and the U.S. come here expecting to access his extensive database of information about mental health disorders in Kenya, without having a commensurate level of commitment to helping and serving the very people they want to write about. As if our heartstrings were not being tugged at before, this really clinched our deep commitment to make a sustained push to bring our skills here to help on multiple levels

with the aim of empowering Kenyans, and ultimately others in Africa too, to live satisfying lives with self-efficacy and dignity.

On the weekend in between the two weeks of the DT visit we went on a safari to Amboseli National Park. Don't even know where to start with that one! My cell phone pics cannot begin to approach some of the images my extremely talented photographer husband David Paul of David Paul Photography was able to capture. Here are a couple teasers:



These pics are a juvenile vervet monkey, a trio of cheetahs, and a precious elephant family.





Notice on the adult elephants that their left tusks are broken off? That's because in the same way that humans are handed either right or left, elephants are tusked right or left. These two parents are both left-tusked so that's how they break branches, move heavy objects, etc. Ever think about what "heavy" might mean to an elephant? Yikes!

Intrigued readers who want to see how good he is with a camera can go to David's Zenfolio website at <http://davidpaulphotography.zenfolio.com/p827908970> for a slide show of 600 images.

DT members will be adding some of their Amboseli impressions and pics here!

In the second week of their whirlwind visit to Kenya, the DT put on a two day training seminar entitled, "Helping Skills for Caring Educators". Eric, Michelle M., and Maggie stepped up to take the lead on this presentation and they did a truly outstanding job!!! This was a workshop open to school personnel as well as KCA students and faculty, focusing on mental health symptoms and needs seen among school-age children and college students.





We had 100 people in attendance, and there have already been two newspaper articles in The Kenyan Star, the main Nairobi paper, written about it! There is another feature article coming too. It's very exciting that a seminar about mental health is making in into the mainstream newspaper; I think it's evidence of the tremendous need and receptivity to what we can offer here!

I also held a brief meeting between four of my most energetic and motivated KCA students with the three DT student members and Dr. Haldeman, to talk about their hopes and goals for a 6 week multicultural exchange program between KCA and CSU Counselor Education students. This Multicultural Exchange Externship creation is one of several of my own personal goals for this sabbatical. I thought about Chi Sig as a likely group who might have a future interest in working with me on that aspect of our collaboration with KCA.

Before the DT departed, some of us still needed to get more animal contact, and so we went to the David Sheldrake Elephant Orphanage and also the Giraffe Center. We discovered, experientially, that juvenile elephants' skin is even tougher than shoe leather. It took David

Sheldrake, the scientist for whom the Center is named, a full 28 years to perfect the baby formula that would enable orphaned elephants to survive and grow. These babies are able to be re-introduced into the wild after a 5 year stay at the orphanage. If you look carefully in the crowd, you will see Maggie, Dr. Litam, and Michelle right in the front getting up close and personal with a baby elephant....



While I deeply love ALL the animals, the highlight of the day for me personally was cuddling with giraffes - as a testament to that statement, could Maggie look any happier? And right there in the background is David with one of his BIG lenses, truly in his element in moment after moment of priceless experiences capturing epic images!



So now, dear readers, you are up to speed. I miss everyone back home but I have to be honest - I LOVE Kenya! Fortunately, there is more to come - I'm only halfway through my adventure here. Thankfully for me :) David is staying with me now through the end of the visit, our kids are arriving on March 9, our dear friend Randy comes at the end of March, and our wonderful friends Jeff and Susan are coming in April. I am planning to offer another panel presentation at KCA, this time intended for faculty of KCA and other local universities, with Dr. Jeff Janata, Clinical Professor at University Hospital, and Dr. Susan Carver, STEM Director for CMSD at CSU.. This next presentation will be about professional development; conceptualizing and designing research, instruction, and book writing. Of course squeezed in with the work will be lots of excursions and visits to other areas of the country; we have barely scratched the surface.

And I plant this seed as you come to the close of this update...if you are feeling a pull to have some part of a life-changing experience helping others and getting epic connections with nature, a vision exists to make that opportunity a reality. There is no more information to share about that now, but water that seed....stay tuned as possibilities may begin to emerge in the foreseeable future!