

Nyumbani Children's Home
Karen, Kenya

Jill Beck
jillcbeck@hotmail.com
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WHO: I traveled with Joe Zickafoose, another fourth year medical student from Case.

WHEN: We spent six weeks in Kenya from February to mid-March. It was an ideal time to go and we came back before the long rains started.

WHERE: We spent the majority of our time in Nyumbani, an orphanage for the HIV-positive orphans located in Karen, a "suburb" of Nairobi. Nyumbani provided housing for volunteers- there were actually about 10 volunteers from all over the world all staying there doing a variety of things.

WHAT: Nyumbani houses approximately 100 kids of a variety of ages. A Kenyan physician, Dr. Rachel Musoke, comes to Nyumbani three afternoons each week to provide care to the kids and also to kids who are a part of the outreach program, Lea Toto. We worked with Dr. Musoke those afternoons providing care to the patients. We also went out with the Lea Tot outreach team a couple of times to some of the slums in Nairobi to provide basic medical care (handing out basic medications and doing basic exams with a nurse) and do HIV testing. In addition, we went to Kenyatta National Hospital one day per week and did rounds on the general pediatrics floor. The rest of our time was spend doing a variety of activities at Nyumbani which ranged from handing out daily medications, helping kids with homework, playing on the playground to sorting beans and rice.

PROS: Nyumbani is used to having volunteers, so they have a system set up and are used to having people come in. They have had medical students before. Housing is available right at the orphanage (and it is quite nice) and meals are provided as well, which makes the transition to living there a little easier. The kids are wonderful and you have a bit of a community with the other volunteers that are there.

CONS: I didn't feel like I had as many medically related experiences as I had hoped for, but I may have been chance. None of the kids were particularly sick while we were there, which is a good thing, but leaves not as much for the medical volunteers to do.