

Ok, so lunch was included. But, still .... there must have been over a hundred people at the first AHI graduation. Flash back to September 11, 2001. The Twin Towers, New York. For so many years, I had been seeking 'safe', watching those towers crumble – there is no safe place, just lives wasted looking for it.



I still remember the day in my therapist's office a few months later; doubled over on his couch, my usual pose with head in hands looking at his shoes and rug. "I can't keep living this way; I want the change to be more radical. I'm thinking I should move to Africa. I'm too broken to be of much use here in America, but maybe overseas. I could cook and clean for a mission group, at least try to give back, to find some meaning in my life or what was the point."

I braced myself. I was 11 years old the first time I said that I wanted to be a missionary in Africa. A 15 year wave of violence followed. I had practiced saying this out loud to my Dr. Dave ... and practiced what his responses could be so as not to be too devastated, still seeking safe. 'Maggie, everyone knows you are crazy, high functioning, and yes, you can fake it well, but: you haven't been overseas in 30 years, can't drive to Seattle, can't even drive on freeways, can't get in elevators with dark ethnic looking men. You space out, check out; half the time you are not sure what year it is or what city you are in. You're suicidal and can hardly read your Bible without nightmares. I agree that after 10 years of therapy we seem stuck and as a therapist, I am so ready for you to move on, but you refuse to quit and I am struggling with the thought that I may have to spend 10 more years of working with you, but seriously Africa. Perhaps we should adjust your medication."

Instead, he laughed, no, more like he hooted then clapped his hands as if a prayer had been answered. AHI was born.



Oh, I wish each and every one of you had been here for graduation. There was so much hope bursting from the Conference Center where we feed our guests. I wish you could have seen the poise and strength of the students, felt the tears of their mamas, heard the aunties ululating that high pitched "lalalalala" song of joy and celebration, had your hand clasped and shake over and over and over and over again. I wish you could have felt the pride of the staff and the gratefulness of the community. I am certain I felt our Abba God smiling. This was a day for students and staff. This was a day for FAHI. A full circle day filled with the meaning of life and suffering.

These kids came into AHI 2 years ago as children, hungry children. They had no idea what they were signing up for, had no understanding of hospitality, and just hoped they would get a meal. Most could barely speak English; none could look me in the eyes and talk. They didn't think I would be so strict or work them so hard or demand excellence, either. Neither did the staff come to think of it! Who is this crazy muzungu lady who expects so much and won't listen to excuses? It's been quite an unsafe journey for all of us! Beverly Staal was here snapping away, so counting on her photos to go onto webpage soon!

The graduates leave as young adults with much possibility and a foundation to build a future upon. Evelyn has been offered a position at Sipi River Lodge in Eastern Uganda. Interviews scheduled for others. Keep praying! The students leave with interview practice, a resume package to hand out, an incredible experience of grace and a home to come back to for a visit, a laugh, no a hoot, a clapping of hands and a belief that God has a plan for their lives and nothing is too difficult for Him.

Speaking of nothing too difficult for God – take a look at the new wing of the Guesthouse. And we have reached our matching grant challenge! Can you believe we didn't even start clearing the land until November? The ring beam is in place, the eucalyptus poles for the ceiling are peeled and drying, and the roof should be on in January!! Plumbing, painting, solar by February? It's possible, Wow! Should be ready for the 2010 EFC teams to paint! Hate to break a tradition. I'll put a page on the website for all of you builder types to see the building progression.



Frans Vorst, our retired Hospitality specialist from Holland returns to AHI in January to work directly with our trainers as we prepare for our new class. So, don't void those checks you had ready to send for the building project, now we need new 2010 student sponsors!!!! Next class begins in February 2010. Only 2 students have a sponsor so far [\$50/month].

I love you and can't thank you enough for your support. Merry, Merry Christmas to all, m

P.S. Dr Dave, You were right. Prayers beyond our understanding were answered that day!