

Teethsavers Newsletter for March 2007

Patricia Tembo, the Field Coordinator for Teethsavers in Chipata District of Zambia, arrived with Jack in Lubbock on January 1. Why? For

Texans to meet the future of Africa and to begin the process of transferring trust - both ways - from Africa to America and America to Africa. There is more to Africa than war, AIDS, poverty, and corruption. There is more to America than war, technology, excesses, and TV entertainment.

Patricia is a 2004 graduate of the Zambia Six-Year Molar Focus School and heads the fourteen-member Teethsavers team in Chipata to give and teach dental care to an area with more than 70,000 children. Patricia lives near our school with her aunt in a small home with no electricity, water pulled from a well with a bucket, and outdoor toilet, and wood or charcoal for cooking. She had never seen an airplane or many modern conveniences before her trip to Texas. Her observations of American traditions, customs, and ways of life may be adapted to boost Teethsavers goals and add to a better life for all in Zambia. Conversely, Texans' observations of Patricia in her presentations to various groups and in meetings with individuals, gained an insight into Zambian traditions and way of life and admiration for Patricia's poise and passion in describing Teethsavers' mission and purpose.

(Parts of the above were adapted from an article in the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal by Beth Pratt, Religion Editor).

A generous donor paid Patricia's airfare for her trip, and after she left the United States, she joined Doranah Muloongo, another Teethsavers graduate and staff member, in the Netherlands as guests of Dr. Karin van Nes. Dr. van Ness was assisted by Doranah for three months when Dr. van Nes was in Chipata last year. Dr. van Ness not only paid Doranah's airfare but showed Doranah and Patricia around many dental facilities and Nijmegen Dental School (an hour from Amsterdam) where they met Dr. Frencken, ART filling developer and researcher and International Dentist of the Year in 1999. Jack received three different e-mails from Dr. Frencken praising Doranah, Patricia, and Teethsavers.

Following the return to Zambia of Jack, Patricia, and Doranah, they went to Lusaka for Jack's three-year renewal of his work permit. Immigration

officials had visited Chipata earlier but forgot to bring the necessary papers for inspection of Teethsavers' school, so this was another of several previous fruitless trips by Jack to resolve the matter. This time the head man of Immigration personally assured Jack that officials would visit the school and Jack would not have to come to Lusaka again. This was the first good news on what turned out to be a day full of good news for Teethsavers.

Patricia and Doranah met with Zambia National Broadcasting and made plans for the following day to do a twenty-five minute oral health show in one of the seven languages the government beams out all over Zambia.. Then the show will be translated into the other six languages for broadcast.

Patricia, Doranah, and Jack then met with Dr. Mtolo at the

Ministry of Health offices. Dr. Mtolo carefully instructed us in what should be included in a letter to the Ministry of Health that could firmly cement our graduates into the system of employment by the Zambian government. Perhaps the cement will be Dr. Frencken. He told Patricia and Doranah on their recent visit that he would do everything possible to support Teethsavers' goal of proper employment for graduates with any and all governments Teethsavers approaches. (Five new Teethsavers graduates began their six-month internship on April 1 under an experienced graduate. Another class will not matriculate until we have jobs secured).

While at the Ministry of Health, Jack met Sam Banda, the representative of Colgate Toothbrushes in Zambia, and discussed with him the possibility of Colgate's selling good toothbrushes to Teethsavers at a reduced price. Through Mr. Banda, Colgate annually distributes at least 150,000 free toothbrushes to needy schools in Zambia.

Jack, Patricia, and Doranah, with a referral from a Chipata educational official, went next to the Zambian schools curriculum office, but the woman who heads the office was out. However, an education official from Meheba Refugee Settlement recognized Jack and sang Teethsavers' praises for its work in Meheba and said the head lady for curriculum had also been a head teacher in Meheba when Teethsavers was there. Jack left materials at the office, including a copy of the November 2003 Texas Dental Association Journal featuring Teethsavers at Meheba. In April Jack will return to the curriculum office to blend in Teethsavers' teaching with the existing oral health curriculum for various grades.

After celebrating this good day with a good lunch, the threesome got lost downtown and asked a gregarious Army man for directions. He was very tall, very thin, and gave them a good tour, emphasizing landmarks with his machine gun.

Teethsavers has had a good start to what we hope and believe will be a good year in Chipata.

Teethsavers International, Inc. encourages donations. Please make checks to:

Westminster Presbyterian Church, Memo: Teethsavers
3321 33rd Street
Lubbock, 79410