



RAY OF HOPE: GLIDE's Love Abroad

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After nearly 24 hours of travel, seven members of the GLIDE community arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, where they would spend almost two weeks in service at Ray of Hope's clinic, community center, and school.

Ray of Hope, just like GLIDE, provides services to the marginalized. Their work stems from a belief that we are all interconnected and share universal human values, which when cultivated, have the power to transform the global community.

People who benefit from their services are not unlike those we serve here in San Francisco - communities that have no voice, whose needs often go unseen and unmet. From children who have endured unspeakable suffering and abuse, to those seeking medical attention for HIV, Ray of Hope uses unconditional love to serve all those in need, a common thread in GLIDE's work in our local community as well.

GLIDE's Ray of Hope Team spent months fundraising and preparing for a trip that would transform their lives beyond their imaginations. This year's team included a diverse array of members - from a former Assistant District Attorney to a man displaced after Hurricane Katrina and current resident at 149 Mason Street Studios, the team represented the spectrum of GLIDE's family and a common call to service. Pastor Karen Oliveto reflects, "Those who hear a call to go on this trip ensure that every member can go, regardless of their ability to pay, which means that everyone joins in the team fundraising efforts."

For 149 Mason Street Studios resident and Hurricane Katrina survivor, Kwame Evans, the trip to Africa had familial and cultural significance. "When I came back, my mother grabbed my face real tight, pulled it down to her, looked into my eyes and said, 'You have completed a circle for our family.' I realized, it wasn't just my dream, it was a dream for my family members also."

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Over the course of their time in Africa, each team member connected with the Ray of Hope community in different and meaningful ways. GLIDE's team spent their days at the Ray of Hope school teaching the children through empowering and creative activities like personal journaling, sharing daily affirmations, group singing and dancing, and learning through symphonic music. The team also contributed to efforts at the Ray of Hope clinic, women's support group, and community health care program by visiting with patients and their families in their homes. Throughout their time in Africa, the team members were consistently moved by the generosity and spirit of the people of Nairobi. Pastor Karen Oliveto recalls, "We experienced unbelievable generosity from those who have so little. They shared their food (of which they have so little) and hospitality joyously with us."

Ray of Hope's lead teacher, Evelyn, explains this generosity, "I teach my children that even when it seems like we have so little to eat, there is always enough to give someone else. When we give, even so little, we get so much more back."

Of the lessons learned by GLIDE's Ray of Hope Team, what Evelyn describes shines brightest. Pastor Oliveto reflects, "Whether at Ray of Hope Learning Center in Nairobi, or serving a meal at GLIDE, when we commit ourselves to the well-being of others through service, something changes in us: we feel part of something greater than ourselves, we feel a deeper connection to others as we realize that what we do in this world really does matter.

"We can make a difference."



For more information about Glide Church and their work for social justice see www.glide.org