

The Red Hippo Arts Project

Sarah Irwin-Gibson's Web Log

Can this be true?!

Jul 18, 2008 in Uncategorized

Hello!

I just thought I ought to put in a blog, as I begin to prepare myself mentally for this exciting adventure that's just around the corner (13 days off to be exact)! I can't believe it (i think i may have begun to overuse this phrase)!

I also wanted to take a second and thank everyone who has supported me thus far! I wouldn't be able to go on this voyage if it weren't for your love and support - or your prayer! So thank you so much!

Camp is nearing an end and soon i will have to begin to figure out what exactly I will take on this adventure! But until then, I am left to daydream about what i'm getting into and how exciting this whole trip will be! I know God has given me the gifts I need to work with this group and together, perhaps we will bring Joy to some children that deserve all the joy in the world!

I'll write more soon! Love to you all!

Sarah

Uganda, here i come!

Jul 30, 2008 in Uncategorized

Hello everyone!

So tomorrow is the big day, when the RHAP leaves Montreal and dives into this amazing adventure! It's quite surreal still and although I know I am prepared and will make the most of what's coming, I'm definitely a little scared!

Preparing for this trip has been alot of fun! I've even managed to through in some family time among all the packing and sorting and what not that comes with travel! This trip makes my trip to Wales seem easy (!!) and will definitely challenge me in many ways. Thank goodness God is coming on it with me! That's all i have to say!

Thank you so much to all of you who are praying for the team and for me while on this exciting adventure! Your support is greatly appreciated!

Love,

Sarah

2 Replies

1. Sue Winn

Jul 31st, 2008 at 8:53 am

Dear Sarah, I writing from the state of Maine! Thank you for the reminder about the date of your departure. Certainly our prayers will follow you, and we look forward to news of your adventures.

God bless you dear Sarah! And love,

Sue

2. Linda Cass Jones

Jul 31st, 2008 at 12:05 pm

I know God will be with you. You are one of His special angels. So glad to be able to armchair travel with you. Will keep you and the project in prayer.

BIG hugs,

Linda

Hello from Africa!

Aug 2, 2008 in Uncategorized

Hello Everyone!

Africa is beautiful - better yet: Winston Churchill was not lying when he said Uganda was the 'Pearl of Africa' - it's stunning. The air, the trees, the soil - but most of all the people! They're so kind and so caring! I've even made a new friend! Guess what! Her name is Sarah and she's just amazing!

Today we are exploring Kampala and coming together as a group! It's all quite exciting when everything is new to explore! Thanks again for your thoughts and prayers! They are SO much appreciated!

I'll write again soon! Love,

Sarah

2 Replies

1. Rachel J =D

Aug 2nd, 2008 at 10:48 pm

Brian showed us that Blog with Colin's, Karl's and his name in it, he added something along the lines of "Brian you're awesome, Colin and Karl suck!" , it was funny, and he fit it really awkwardly after your "Love, "

Rach Xx

2. Linda Cass Jones

Aug 2nd, 2008 at 11:03 pm

I am so glad that you are finding your way so well. I am hoping that you are getting my messages. It is hard for me to tell whether you are or not. Keeping you close in thought and prayer.

*Love,
Linda*

Seeing both sides!

Aug 4, 2008 in Uncategorized

Hello!

Thanks to those of you who are posting comments - i love them! These last two days have been such eye-openers for me! This life is so different from ours back home. We've now met both organizations we'll be working with - starting with the boys yesterday from the Nesco group (info on website) who invited us to lunch and then put on an acrobatics show to show how thankful they are for our support.

The creators of nesco have nothing themselves and yet have brought in about 30 kids from the streets and feed them, find ways to put them through schooling, and care for them. God's presence is clear - it's so AWESOME!

Today we met the kids at IN need home - the ones we'll be teaching and doing art workshops with! They are amazing kids and so grateful for the opportunity they have. We walked through the slum the kids from the school come from and i was just in shock! At one point a little boy with a doll came up and walked with us. He took me hand - it was adorable. We had to have him turn around at one point for fear he'd get lost. But the school the kids are in is a total haven and so amazing. I'm so excited to start teaching!

We went into downtown kampala today and it was complete chaos. I was a little scared! You can't go into a market stall/store without being told to buy something.. and everyone assumes you can buy. We went to a great cafe and had delicious coffee - of which i'll bring some home! Just you wait!

Enough for now - but they're will be lots more to tell! Thanks to those of you that are following this blog - its so fun to share with you! Love you lots!

Sarah x

5 Replies

1. Danny

Aug 4th, 2008 at 5:53 pm

I'm so excited for you, Sarah! I'll definitely keep coming back to this blog, so keep writing!

Love you!

2. Sarah Dee

Aug 4th, 2008 at 9:31 pm

I'm keeping up with you! Your adventures sound wonderful - especially the yummy coffee! Keep writing, I'll keep reading, love.

Love you, miss you!

Sarah

3. Jane

Aug 5th, 2008 at 4:16 pm

This is so interesting, Sarah. Thanks for sharing your trip with us - the great and the terrible.

4. Catherine Gibson

Aug 6th, 2008 at 4:23 pm

Wow! Isn't it amazing to come to terms with the difference between poverty there and poverty back home? (ie, students who consider themselves poor back home are wealthy in Africa). A total change of perceptions, ay? I always found that humbling and reassuring. Every time I feel poor in my regular life, I often find myself thinking back to the kids I saw in Mexico, living in latino slums that I was sometimes afraid of walking through unaccompanied.

I'm thrilled to see you're learning so much and so excited to teach in return! What an awesome opportunity for you! Keep up the good work Teacher Sarah!

xx

Finxx

5. Vincent

Aug 7th, 2008 at 12:28 am

Hey dude,

I'm so happy for you and also kinda jealous with a bit of regret. I sort of fell like I should be there with you but looking at the way things have gone and are going for me here it's good that I didn't go with you. My time will come and it will be amazing but for now I will stay here and send you my love. it's good to hear you are doing well and I hope you keep it up. Take care

Love

Vincent

p.s. I get to see you soon!!!!

End of Week 1

Aug 8, 2008 in Uncategorized

Hello!

Thank you to all of you who have been following the blog and those of you who have commented! I LOVE hearing from you and am so glad to have you as friends back home!

One week is over and it has been the most life-changing week of my 22 years. I have seen so much and felt so much and am so glad i am here getting to experience this - being able to give back and support organizations that are doing good for the sake of doing good, because God has called them to.

Today we met and shared how our first week went (as today was a holiday in memory of the teacher who passed away last summer while volunteering here). During the meeting we all expressed how much we felt like a family already - no matter where you go, you need family (as noticed in Wales - thank you to my family there!) and to those of you in Montreal - as well as to my biological family - who are always there no matter how far away i go. But this family we have become a part of here in Kampala knows we are here to love the kids and to share with the kids and because it makes the kids happy, they love us in return! It's wonderful. This school has managed to be more than just a school - they are the parents to many of these kids - the sole nurturer who teaches the children everything (from table manners, to how to be a good neighbour - even to TOILET manners!! (best part of assembly!))

So into the second week we go and i am very excited to get to work more with the kids. I'm working on a few activities which i'll talk more about later - mainly reading and writing projects. By the end i'd like each kid to have made a book or two which they themselves can read and share with other kids. I think God will direct me whatever way it should go - in either case teaching these children is phenomenal.

This afternoon we're heading to an African party organized through the Nesco boys - it should be quite exciting. Tomorrow we're going to Jinja to see the source of the Nile and visit the village. On Sunday we're going to church here in our hotel and then to the owner of In Need Home's house - she brought us avocados and bananas from her compound and they are HUGE. The kids were given bananas as a present yesterday and some of them were the size of the kids' faces! It was so fun to watch them devour these GIANT fruits!

(This is for Colin but others might find this interesting!) I've been meaning to write and mention how much people eat! It's polite to leave things on your plate as it means you are satisfied. When we ate at the Nesco boys place last weekend none of us could finish our plates - but the kids helped us! They were like Colin Ratcliffe at camp - the HUMAN GARBERATOR (i did it Colin - see i can keep my promises!) I was amazed at how much a little girl of 6 years old could eat! She finished 3 more plates after her own! And she gets regular meals!!

SO - enough sharing for now - i'll be sure to write again soon. (I thought i had, but it appears the message was not posted. What a shame! Oh well!)

I love you all very much and send many many HUGS and KISSES your way!

Sarah

ps. I'm learning so many awesome songs from the kids - they could sing for hours and all you have to do is prompt a song on them!xx

3 Replies

1. Alex

Aug 8th, 2008 at 2:58 pm

*Sarah,
sounds like your having a great time!! Miss you,
SMILE!! :)*

Alex

2. Linda Cass Jones

Aug 8th, 2008 at 3:29 pm

I feel so privileged to be able to see this experience through your eyes, Sarah. I love the way you see the world and so I know I have the best seat on the bus for this trip!!

I know that your heart is huge and don't know just how big a person's heart can get, but it is clear that yours is expanding by the second.

As in all important things, the most valuable thing you will give them is love.

I hope that you will find time to keep a personal journal for yourself, noting what you feel happening within as you grow and change through this amazing time.

Lots and lots of love and even more hugs,

Linda

3. Olive Flowers

Aug 9th, 2008 at 10:42 am

Dear Sarah, I'm so thrilled to hear your wonderful experiences. I wish I could be there so I am relying on you to keep me posted. Miss you. Love, Olie

Weekend of New things!

Aug 11, 2008 in Uncategorized

Hello!

The weekend is over and to sum it up in a few words would be hard, but i think i could say in the most part - i have learnt that the people of Uganda are amazing people - and just because we came to Uganda they seem to just love us, without questions. It makes it easy to love them in return (Thanks Linda for your comment - i'm really learning alot about how big a heart can get here!)

On Friday we were invited to a little village for a party which was held at an orphanage. We took a taxi all the way out to the village, along very bumpy roads into the depths of the woods! It was awesome! As soon as we stepped out of the taxi i knew i was in a different world. A canopy had been put up and sofas had been put out for the guests to sit on - all the children were sitting together and the people of the village sat around an open space where they put on a show for you (Sam has pictures in his blog of the visit to Medi's orphanage). They fed us huge plates of traditional ugandan food, brought water around for us to wash our hands (we ate with our fingers- what they call God given forks!) and then put on traditional dancing for us! It was awesome! I felt spoiled - they didn't even know us and yet they went to all this trouble to welcome us.

Saturday Sue, Noelle, CHara, Charlotte, Ronah and myself went to Jinja for a girls day out! We visited the source of the Nile and BUjigali falls - using boda boda's two by two to get around!! Some trips ILL NEVER FORGET! Noelle and i have become very close thanks to the exciting motorcycle (boda boda's are a big part of transport here!) ride! From one to the other we passed through small villages with several people on the side laughing at the 3 boda boda's carrying 6 people - 5 of which were "Muzongo's" = white people! At one point we decided we'd point out the whit people too - our driver laughed and thought it was funny! We're getting used to being pointed out!

Sunday was our day of rest and so we went up to Anny's (the owner of IN need home) for lunch and the afternoon. Her house is up on a hill and it's nice and cool - i was wonderful to see her house and to be invited! It was a lovely Sunday afternoon and we were spoiled with delicious foods - so yummy. I'm beginning to get tired of the regular beans and rice we can get for cheap at the hotel! It was fun to have a change!

So into the week we go! I'll write more soon! Hope all is well wherever you may be!

Lots of love!

Sarah xx

One Reply

1. Linda Cass Jones

Aug 12th, 2008 at 10:37 pm

We have been away at a wedding and I couldn't wait to get back to hear your news. I know a little of what you speak when you talk of being loved just because you are there - from my work at the Maison de soins. Humbling isn't it?

It is so nice that you are so open to the richness of the diversity you are experiencing. I hear great respect in what you write and it makes my heart sing.

Cannot wait to hear about your experiences with the kids.

Love

Linda

teacher teacher!

Aug 13, 2008 in Uncategorized

Hello!

Week two of teaching is half way done - the kids are settling into having so many Muzungu teachers around and are loving the arts project! It's so much fun to see how they light up when any of us arrive! It's such a treat to be cared for in that way by these kids who really have nothing - but they know how to give what really matters! it's awesome!

So far this week we've been working on writing projects revolving around one of my favourite books " Mr. Funny" . The kids are having a ball trying to understand what a funny face it. With one group we worked on drawing funny faces, while the other will be working on writing a funny story about mr. funny together! It'll be a laugh - hopefully!

I'll write more soon! Just wanted to write a quick note! Sending hugs and kisses to you all! Thanks again for all your prayers and support!

Love,

Sarah

2 Replies

1. Donna

Aug 13th, 2008 at 12:14 pm

Hi Sarah! I have been enjoying reading your blogs... thanks for posting them. I'm so happy that things are going so well. Can't wait to see some photos and to hear your stories in person when you're back!

:D

2. Audrey O' Braham

Aug 15th, 2008 at 10:48 am

hi sarah,

it's amazing to see just how generous they are towards you guys. And that's simply because you are there with them. Please let me know how the the writing project with the book goes. It's nice to be able to read you. It makes this experience more tangible. Closer to home. I am so proud of you.

Love, kisses and hugs to you and them!

Audrey

How time flies!

Aug 18, 2008 in Uncategorized

Hello!

Sorry it has been so long since i have written. I have begun to get use to being here and therefore have less new thoughts i feel i must share and are just expanding old ones! But these are also important to share and so today i will blog for you!

We spent the rest of last week running fun afternoon activities with the kids - watching there faces as we pulled out a giant orange ball was priceless and it was even better when they got the experience of catching it! Using ribbons for dance brought huge smiles and wide eyes. It's amazing how easy it has been to show these kids things they've never seen and bring utter joy to them - it's so simple. And so worth it!

As for teaching, it has gone well! The teachers are happy to let me run whatever activity i'd like to run, so we've done alot of writing, some math work (mastering counting tens and ones) and introducing lots of new words! I've even gotten to learn some Luganda, although my memory is awful!!

This past weekend Sue, Chara and i went to Entebbe to the Uganda Wildlife park, where we saw rhino's, cheeky monkeys who tried to steal our lunch, chimps, a lion that looked just like Aslan (im sure it was him Catherine!!) and several other animals. We will have to wait for the safari to see Elephants and giraffes ,.. but thats ok! It was a nice relaxing day and we enjoyed sitting by lake victoria taking in the view for a good while!

Sunday we went to visit a school called "Alpha and Omega" that is a boarding school for kids of all types. We saw a special group of kids perform songs, play african instruments and dance! It was spectacular! They were so talented! We spent the afternoon exploring the area around us and managed to find good coffee (although most ugandan coffee is good - its often served as instant for easy-ness sake) at a very MZUNGO (white person's) area - but decided it was worth the break and just enjoyed it!!

Today i went downtown with a few others and found stamps to send some mail and then Noelle and i split from the group and made our way around the taxi park to the fabric district and bargained for material!!! We're getting so good! I'm not even afraid to cross the streets (well almost not!!) It makes a difference to be adjusted and to know the area is safe. I wouldn't walk alone at night, but for short distances i know it's safe to be out in the day time!!

Ill write more about this week soon! Love to you all! xx

Sarah

One Reply

1. Marcus

Aug 20th, 2008 at 2:26 pm

I miss my Mzungo!!

Sounds like you're having a really amazing time. Can't wait to see pictures :)

School is over!

Aug 23, 2008 in Uncategorized

Hello everyone!

So we have finished our program with the school and had a great last day with dancing, showing off artwork and even a special goodbye for the teachers. Today we went over to the school to help with a Barklay's bank fundraiser as they are trying to help out InNeed Home and Nesco by giving them food and coal. The people from Barklay's were taken down into Namwongo and some although living near by, admitted to not knowing that was there. I think it has changed their lives as much as ours!

This afternoon we are helping out with a fundraiser for the Nesco boys by running afternoon activities for kids and then getting to watch the performances!! It should be well and fun! A few of us had dresses made out of African fabric by one of the teacher's cousins and we are wearing them to be festively African! Great fun!

Tomorrow we leave bright and early for a 3 day, 2 night safari. It has meant being packed 5 days early! Quite something, eh Mom!! We arrive back to the hotel in Kampala Tuesday afternoon! I am looking forward to seeing LIONS, and TIGERS, and BEARS. OH MY... i mean Elephants.. and Giraffes.. and Hippos!! It will be good fun!

Wednesday will be our final goodbye with the kids of which i am not looking forward to. It will be hard as they have all left a mark on us... they're such wonderful children! I am counting my blessings that i got the chance to meet them!

Love you lots!

Sarah

4 Replies

1. John Richard

Aug 23rd, 2008 at 7:53 am

Have a great safari and a safe trip home. It has been interesting to follow your experiences half way around the world in this way. Cheers!

J.R.

2. Linda Cass Jones

Aug 23rd, 2008 at 11:42 pm

It is so hard to believe that your time is done there - probably harder for you than for me. Such a blessing on both sides - for you and for the lucky children and bigger folks who had the joy of meeting you. I cannot think of a more amazing ambassador for young people and for Canada. My heart swells with pride thinking of you as a representative of both. I can't wait to talk to you about this experience.

Off you go to your "lions and tigers and more". What an awesome way to conclude a life changing experience.

*Have fun and we will get together soon.
BIG,BIG hugs!!
xxxooo
3. Norma Kiehn*

Aug 25th, 2008 at 9:34 am

So glad you are enjoying the experience there, Sarah. We miss you here and are looking forward to your return.

*Hugs and more hugs.xxxooo
4. Catherine Gibson*

Aug 25th, 2008 at 1:02 pm

Yay!! African Safari!!! You are indeed blessed to have this opportunity and we're all proud of you!! (especially for not being afraid to cross the street! - I mean - ocean?) :)

Can't wait to hear more upon your return.

*I love you, my darling,
Catherine*

Heading back to the west!

Aug 28, 2008 in Uncategorized

Hello!

I must admit fast internet is quite a treat and western delights much appreciated, but apart from those non-necessities, it is sad to have had to leave such an amazing group of people and such a beautiful country! The kids were so excited wednesday when we came back after the safari (which was amazing!). They all jumped up from there lessons and gave us HUGE hugs! It was awesome!

Having to hug them goodbye, knowing we may not see some of them again (as they may get sponsored, or move away) was hard! But as Teacher Ronah said, we are not putting a "full stop" to this visit, just a coma, meaning we may well be back and we musn't be sad when we don't know that it's actually goodbye!

I am now in Amsterdam visiting Hilary and en route to England for a little holiday before i get back to the city and back into the groove of McGill! Thank you so much to everyone who prayed for me during this trip and to all of who made it possible! It was life changing and so memorable! I will miss Africa!

Love you lots!

Sarah