Perspectives
Hope and Possibility: A Summer in Kenya

During sabbatical leave from IUPUI's Riley Children's Hospital, Neonatal Section Director Dr. James Lemons, his wife Pam Lemons, a pediatric nurse practitioner at Riley, and their son Kevin (17) and daughter Meghan (14), spent nine weeks living and working in Eldoret—a city of 100,000 in northwestern Kenya. Eldoret is home to Moi University Medical School, the IU School of Medicine's partner in a collaborative medical education project for the past five years (see March 1994 International Programs Newsletter).

The IU-Kenya project was initiated several years ago when a handful of Indiana University faculty in the Department of Medicine—Bob Einterz, Joe Mamlin, Charles Kelley, and Dave VanReken—established a formal relationship with Kenya's new medical school, Moi University Medical School (named after Kenya's current president, Daniel Arap Moi), located in Eldoret.

The IU Medical School pledged to have a faculty member on site in Eldoret for a year at a time, for a least ten years. The decision to commit ourselves to ten years resulted from our observations that Moi University's medical students are among the best and brightest young people in their country, with the leadership potential to assist in building Kenya's future. Yet, trained leadership is the scarcest resource in Africa today. By developing longterm relationships between IU faculty and Kenyan students, we hoped that not only could our faculty teach these wonderful students medicine, but we could also help nurture those qualities that will be so important for developing good leaders as well.

Our family was in Kenya only nine weeks, overlapping with the full year's stays of David and Ruth VanReken, and Chris Suelzer. While Pam, Kevin, Meghan, and I worked in Eldoret, our eldest son Ken—a DePauw University sophomore—spent the summer in Colorado working at an Easter Seal camp for handicapped kids. It was wonderful to have the whole family involved in providing care for children who continue to smile despite disability and poverty.

Kenya is a fascinating country with a rich history and wonderful peoples, but like much of Africa, Kenya faces almost insurmountable challenges. For a variety of reasons, the infrastructure of the country appears to be deteriorating: roads, telephone system, water, sewage, electricity, and public health. Major health problems include pervasive malaria (associated with a high infant mortality rate), approximately 20% HIV positivity, severe malnutrition (particularly among infants and children), and a host of other serious infectious/parasitic diseases, many of which could be eradicated with relatively simple public health measures. But certainly one of the major issues that needs to be addressed, along with these other health and social problems, is the extremely rapid rate of population growth, one of the highest in the world. In addition, physicians are scarce, with only 140 trained each year.

Needless to say, our family's time in Kenya was filled to the brim, in part because we were all able to work while we were there. Our son Kevin and daughter Meghan each taught English and phonics to 180 nursery school age children (4-6 years old) in the Testimony School located just up the block from our house in Eldoret. Each day at 8 am they walked to school, then taught for five hours before returning home. They loved the children and the teachers, about forty on staff, with whom they became great friends. Knowing that Meghan and Kevin were happy, productive, and safe made Pam's and my life much easier so that we were able to focus upon our work as well.

Pam, a pediatric nurse practitioner with lots of experience working with severely handicapped infants, became a fixture in the newborn nursery, teaching the nursing staff and making rounds daily on the small premature and other sick neonates in the Eldoret District Hospital. Her positive and knowledgeable presence seemed to make a big difference in the morale and enthusiasm of the nursing staff, who appreciated her as an...
excellent teacher and caretaker.

My time was spent primarily on the pediatric wards, providing patient care and teaching about 40-50 medical students. Each day was filled with great adventure, with totally unexpected events, and with great joy, as well as pathos. Often ten or fifteen children would be admitted during the afternoon, and three or four would be dead by morning. Access to usual resources such as laboratory, X-ray, blood bank, and medicines was often limited.

Food and laundry supplies for patients were almost nonexistent, often compounding the severity of the illnesses affecting the children. The staff—nurses, physicians, and other support personnel—were outstanding, very well trained, and hard working. Somehow they maintained a positive attitude in the face of constant adversity, and by watching and listening to these wonderful people, I quickly learned to adapt to whatever came my way—accepting the enormity of the problems facing the Kenyan people, while doing what I could.

Kenya is a country of striking contrasts—of indescribable beauty, yet devastating poverty, with abundant and exotic wildlife that few Kenyans have the opportunity to see or enjoy—a country that should have a bright future, but instead faces great uncertainty as to future development. While Kenyan cultures prioritize their children, the country has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world.

Those of us who have participated in the IU-Kenya project have had to learn that hopes for the future of such a developing country rests in its future leaders. As Drs. Einterz and Mamlin have so eloquently stated elsewhere, such leadership is likely to reside in the young medical students currently being trained there and is one of the important reasons for Indiana University’s investment of faculty in Eldoret and the Moi Medical School. But as we contemplated further, perhaps the real future is in the hands of an even younger generation, such as the nursery school children with whom Kevin and Meghan worked, and who receive support from Sarah Ellen Mamlin and others concerned with the Testimony School. The problems confronting Kenya are enormous and will take many, many years to address. However, we all came away with a sense of hope and possibility, because the large majority of Kenyans are wonderful people who are extremely capable, given the right assistance and support.

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JIM LEMONS
Riley Children’s Hospital

International Studies Certificates Awarded at IU Fort Wayne

The Fort Wayne campus of Indiana University has an undergraduate Certificate Program in International Studies which just awarded its first two certificates in Fall 1994 to students Tracy Ging, a management and marketing major, and Ivo Travnicek, a major in political science. Although the program has been in place for several years, it was not until the program’s first certificate award was given to Tracy Ging that the program actually achieved realization. For 1993-94 coordinator John Bell of History, and 1994-95 coordinator Gerald Houseman of Political Science, the program has now moved into a new phase of its development. Houseman believes that “this certificate may strengthen a bachelor’s degree in almost any major because of the increasing awareness of the global dimensions to many subjects.”

The program consists of a core course, Political Science Y371 Workshop in International Topics, plus a broad number of options that can be taken from the departments of Foreign Languages, Business, History, Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, as well as other departments and schools at the Fort Wayne campus. In addition to Bell and Houseman, members of the Certificate Program committee include Zoher Shipchandler of Management and Marketing, and Wen-Hi Tsai of Sociology, the founder and first coordinator of the program.