

Christian Children's Fund

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Swedish Woman Experiences Realities of African Life

Richmond, Va. – Oct. 14, 2008 - Ebba McArt's privileged childhood in Sweden's excellent educational systems, stands in strong contrast with that of the child she sponsors through Christian Children's Fund.

In June, McArt met 16-year-old Mercy Lungu for the first time in Zambia. It was part of a Study Tour sponsored by CCF, which has been helping deprived, vulnerable and excluded children since 1938. The CCF Study Tour is an opportunity for sponsors and donors to meet their sponsored children while traveling through villages and towns in different countries.

"More than 600 sponsors have participated in CCF Study Tours since the program began in 2002. "We have taken participants to more than 17 countries throughout the world," said CCF Assistant Director of Marketing Gary Duncan.

Participants observe the realities of life in developing countries. For McArt, it also meant seeing it through the eyes of her sponsored child, who lives in a community with issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS and rape.

McArt said that although life is hard for Mercy, she has a strong and loving family. "There is no whining or crying from children even with harsh living conditions. Children seem well adjusted and happy," said McArt.

Mercy's family teaches her values, priorities and goals. Although the country of Zambia has a high level of poverty, teenage children display diligence, hard work and entrepreneurial attitudes, which McArt was pleased to see.

McArt has corresponded with Mercy's family for 11 years from her current home in Grantham, N.H. She has communicated primarily with Mercy's father.

"She is a fairly shy person, but we definitely felt like we knew each other" because of our letters, McArt said.



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Christian Children's Fund (CCF) is a global force for children, helping the world's deprived, excluded and vulnerable survive and thrive in order to reach their full potential. Serving children since 1938, CCF works in 32 countries and assists approximately 15.2 million children and family members worldwide, regardless of race, creed or origin. CCF is a member of the ChildFund Alliance.

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Mercy is thinking about becoming a journalist and is a good student who likes to read, McArt said. She also likes to sing.

Mercy's older sister wants to be a nurse. Although she scored high on the admissions test, the cost of higher education is not within the family's reach.

"This just reminds me that you can't take life for granted," McArt said. "I believe that most Americans view education as a right and not as a privilege."

The CCF Study Tours are divided into two components. The first provides participants with a first-hand look at CCF activities and programs. The second provides them with visits to country sites.

McArt was able to visit Victoria Falls and the Chobe National Park where she went on a safari and saw warthogs, buffalo, elephants, crocodiles and giraffes.

"The whole experience was memorable," McArt said, "It definitely changed me. I was able to meet my sponsored child and two of her family members. I learned a lot about the people and culture of Zambia, a country not well known to me before the tour."

For more information on CCF's Study Tours, visit www.christianchildrensfund.org and click on "Study Tours."



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