

Christian Children's Fund

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Mattel Executive Explores Zambia

Richmond, Va. – Oct. 10, 2008 - Former Mattel Executive Judy Ambrose is greeted by about 40 African children who perform a welcome song for her on a recent trip to Zambia.

Ambrose, a Newport Coast, Calif., resident, was one of 30 Christian Children's Fund (CCF) sponsors who traveled to Zambia in June on a CCF Study Tour. The tours are an opportunity for sponsors and donors to meet their sponsored children while traveling through many villages and towns in different developing countries.

Gary Duncan, CCF assistant director of marketing, has led sponsors on Study Tours to 17 countries throughout the world. "More than 600 sponsors have participated in CCF Study Tours since the program began in 2002," said Duncan.

A dedicated CCF sponsor, Ambrose has three children – in Brazil, Thailand and India. Although she does not have a sponsored child in Zambia, she decided to participate in the Study Tour to Africa for a new experience.

"I thought this CCF Study Tour would be a great way to visit Africa for the first time," said Ambrose.

As the tour progressed, she photographed other sponsors as they met with their children at the recreational park "Dream Valley," located outside of Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. Sponsors and children tossed Frisbees, kicked soccer balls and participated in balloon races.

"It was a beautiful location, a great day, and the CCF staff did a terrific job of organizing a day that we will all remember," said Ambrose.

During the tour, the group visited a small one-room preschool in the Kafue community area that has only 20 desks with one or two windows. "Although primitive, the space ensures that pre-school children are provided with an education and a foundation upon which to build their future, noted Duncan.



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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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“Early childhood development is a key area of focus for CCF,” Duncan said. “Those who travel with us are often surprised by how primitive the spaces are, but these spaces become the building blocks for education.”

Ambrose was impressed by what she observed.

“The coordination the CCF staff has to do is amazing. They really did a great job. The children look happy and healthy and cared for. CCF is making sure they’re taken care of,” Ambrose said.

She was particularly moved by a memory work group program for the Chainda Project. Due to the high risk of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and illnesses in Zambia, the parents create memory books so they can leave something for their children if they were to die. The books allow parents to share their heritage with their children by filling composition books with drawings, photographs and written narratives of their lives.

“The memory book program made a huge impression on me. It’s so sad to think of all the children who may be orphaned at a young age, but with the memory books they will have something to help them learn about and remember their parents and family history,” said Ambrose.

On another occasion the Study Tour met with the Kulya Wayuma Women’s Group, a community bank program that organizes loans for small business enterprises. Women grow vegetables and grain and raise chickens. They feed their families and they sell the excess. The women also guard the keys to the wooden money box, which is the size of a shoebox with three padlocks. The carefully guarded money box holds all of the funds the group uses to manage its businesses.

“Zambia was just amazing, truly amazing. Out of the three CCF trips I’ve been on, I think this one was the best,” Ambrose said. “Some of the programs that we saw really made an impression -- the health clinic under the mango tree, the memory books, and the women’s community bank where the women greeted us with such joyful songs.”

For more information on CCF’s Study Tours, visit www.christianchildrensfund.org and click on “Study Tours.”



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