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## Roanoke College student gives care and Rooney dolls to African orphans

by rcnewsblog on September 5, 2011



What started out as a mission trip through his church in Ohio became a two-time venture for Roanoke College student James Riggs. This past summer, Riggs, a junior, volunteered at an orphanage in Namibia, Africa, called Children of Zion Village.

“I was the village’s helping hand while I was there,” he explained.

Children of Zion Village is an orphanage that houses about 60 children as young as a few months old to age 20.

While staying in a small house just outside of the children’s home, Riggs woke up every day at 7 a.m. and prepared for the day’s unique events.

He wrote in an email, “There was never a ‘typical’ day... I helped cook for 60 children, drove two hours to scoop cow manure for the garden, took children to the health clinic, dug vegetable plots, destroyed and constructed a mud hut, visited the hospital, and helped out at a local feeding center”.

Even though every day was filled with different tasks, Riggs said “being with children” was the most enriching part of his experience in Namibia. Riggs first visited Children of Zion Village in 2009 with members of his youth group from Epiphany United Methodist Church. He promised the children that he would return, so he went back to the orphanage by himself this summer.

“People don’t usually live up to their promises, but I wanted to show these children that I did,” Riggs explained.

Before his second trip to Namibia, he spoke with Roanoke College President Mike Maxey. Riggs asked President Maxey if he could provide stuffed Rooney hawk dolls, Roanoke College’s mascot, to give to the children at the orphanage.

“When they received their Rooneys they all broke out into some of the biggest smiles that I had seen since arriving a month earlier,” Riggs said.

Riggs was originally motivated to return to Children of Zion Village on a promise and “to see how much the children had grown in the past two years”. But, in actuality, he left a changed person.

Riggs summed up his experience via Twitter—“Africa has changed me for the better. I now live with more energy and more fun than I ever have (if that is possible). If they can smile every day so can I.”

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**Judy Hall**

What a great story. I have done similar trips to Tanzania with the Carpenters Kids program so I know exactly how this experience changed your life. Good for you!

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I'm so glad you had the opportunity to see the children again! EFL is always needed!

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Great story... Jimmy, so glad you could share this with all of us! Very inspirational!

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Great article Caitlin and great job James Rigg for donating your time to help others.

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