

Graduate nursing student makes difference in Tanzania

by Mitch Laursen and Chuck Brown, UNMC public relations

Michelle Kowalczyk, on the left and Kim Krowne, on the right, sit with children at the Matumaini orphanage in the Tanzanian village of Rau. A UNMC College of Nursing graduate student has co-founded a non-profit organization that aims to make life better in poverty-stricken Tanzania.

From health care promotion to finding ways to feed and educate people in Tanzanian villages, the Knock Foundation does what it can to make a difference.



Michelle Kowalczyk, on the left and Kim Krowne, on the right, sit with children at the Matumaini orphanage in the Tanzanian village of Rau.

The foundation was started by Michelle Kowalczyk, a UNMC College of Nursing graduate student who plans to graduate in May, and Kim Krowne, another big-hearted volunteer.

"Building healthy communities and leading them out of poverty is the focus of the United Nation's World Millennium Project goals," said Sheila Ryan, Ph.D., professor and director of international programs for nursing who visited the Tanzanian village of Rau and witnessed the foundation's work. "Michelle and Kim are getting this done in this local village. I'm not sure they know how important their work is as a model for others."

Kowalczyk first traveled to Africa in 2007 to participate in a mother-baby clinic. As she visited with children there, her passion to help grew.

"At the College of Nursing, we are enormously proud of Michelle," said Janet Cuddigan, Ph.D., chairwoman of College of Nursing adult health and illness department. "She truly exemplifies the 'best and brightest' in the nursing profession."

The foundation provides ground-level support that benefits the people in untold ways, Dr. Ryan said. She noted that in Rau, the foundation started a program that allowed villagers to raise and breed pigs to eat. In a year, the village went from having 12 pigs to more than 100.

The foundation also hosted an education program for villagers that covered issues such as:

Goal setting;

Self image and relationships;

Family planning and birth control; and

Future plans

In the future, the Knock Foundation plans include the development of a medical facility in Tanzania and a medical mission trip that may become a bi-annual event.

For more information, visit
www.knockfoundation.org.

HIV/AIDS prevention techniques.

"They 'passed the word' to six people and more than 200 villagers attended this two-day health education program," Dr. Ryan said. "It's clear the community extends deep respect, wisdom and love for both these young women for their on-going commitment and highly valued support."

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