

The Human Touch

Written by Diane Schwab, D.C.

Saturday, 01 September 2018 00:00 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 January 2019 12:23

This was my third trip to Africa. I go because I understand the profound effect that one adjustment can make on a child's life. Making the 10,572-mile round trip takes a physical and emotional toll, but the travel is worth it if it changes even the life of only one child. We changed many lives in our 11-day trip.

We served all ages, but I was drawn by the children who needed care. The villages are remote and the only outsiders the villagers see are missionaries and the team of chiropractors who travel to them. We do not speak their language. We try diligently not to offend their customs. When we do (and we do), they laugh at us. Laughter is the universal language; it unites us as human beings.



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The team consisted of 17 caring souls. We came from all over the United States, and most of us had never met before the trip. We bonded quickly over the shared desire to change the world, one human touch at a time. The experiences we shared have woven our lives together. Each of my teammates will forever be a part of my story. Our unconditional love and support for each other during this overwhelming experience can only be described as unwavering commitment.

We served in a small town, doing daily outreach to remote villages hours away from our home base, traveling by van on terrain that could not be called a road. Some of the trips kept us out all day. On those days, we packed a lunch of chicken and rice and ate in the van, only after pulling away from the village where people may not have eaten that day. I do not think any of us finished our meals. We would pretend we were full, but we just wanted to pass along part of our meal to the small gang of children running behind us on our way out of town.

Handing a starving child part of our lunch, one would think that he would eat every bite. However, they were very quick to find other children with whom to share. They knew what it was like to be without, and wanted to include as many as they could in their new bounty, even if it meant they only got a bite themselves.

To be handed a child by a parent who does not speak one's language, understand one's culture, and may have never seen a white person before, was an honor that I did not take for granted. They innately trusted that we were there to help. We had translators, and did everything in our power to make sure they understood the meaning of chiropractic.

A parent's desire for their child to be as healthy as possible transcends socioeconomic and cultural bounds. When all personal possessions and basic survival needs have been taken away, all that is left is love. It is what makes us human, and what connects people all around the world.

I placed my hands on many children infected by malaria. Seeing children with raging fevers and body aches was emotionally hard to handle, but they did not complain. It wasn't in their nature. They had absolutely nothing and were grateful just to be touched. What I saw as a simple adjustment— a spinal correction and the release of neurological stress— to them was a miracle. I've corrected sacral subluxations many times. But for the little girl who could not bend over for months due to a trauma, this correction—allowing her to bend over and touch her toes—was life-altering.

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It was humbling to be invited into the chief's hut to care for his injured daughter. We had been in his village for hours, and I think he was unsure how long we could serve his community. He placed the treatment of all his people first, and then his family was the last to be seen. Even then, he asked that his daughter be taken care of before himself. When he knew I would care for her, he sent for her. She came into the hut, bent at the waist and in obvious pain. She never spoke. It was relayed to me that the young woman had sustained a serious fall the year before, and had been suffering since then. I took my time and corrected her spine. We could visibly see her relax on the portable table, and after the adjustment she walked upright and without a limp. We stayed until all we had a chance to serve everyone who wanted our help.

Unless one has been to these areas, it is very difficult to imagine the level of poverty that exists. When the superficial concerns of personal property are stripped away and we get down to basic survival, it's easier to truly appreciate the human connection. When all you truly have is the human next to you, you appreciate them so much more. The people we met in Africa appreciated us, and I will be forever grateful for the way each of them changed my soul.



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