

I wish this last blog entry were coming to you from the exciting city of Livingstone. However, I am safe and sound back home, no matter how much I wish I were still in Zambia. I am so grateful for the time I spent there and the incredible opportunities I had.

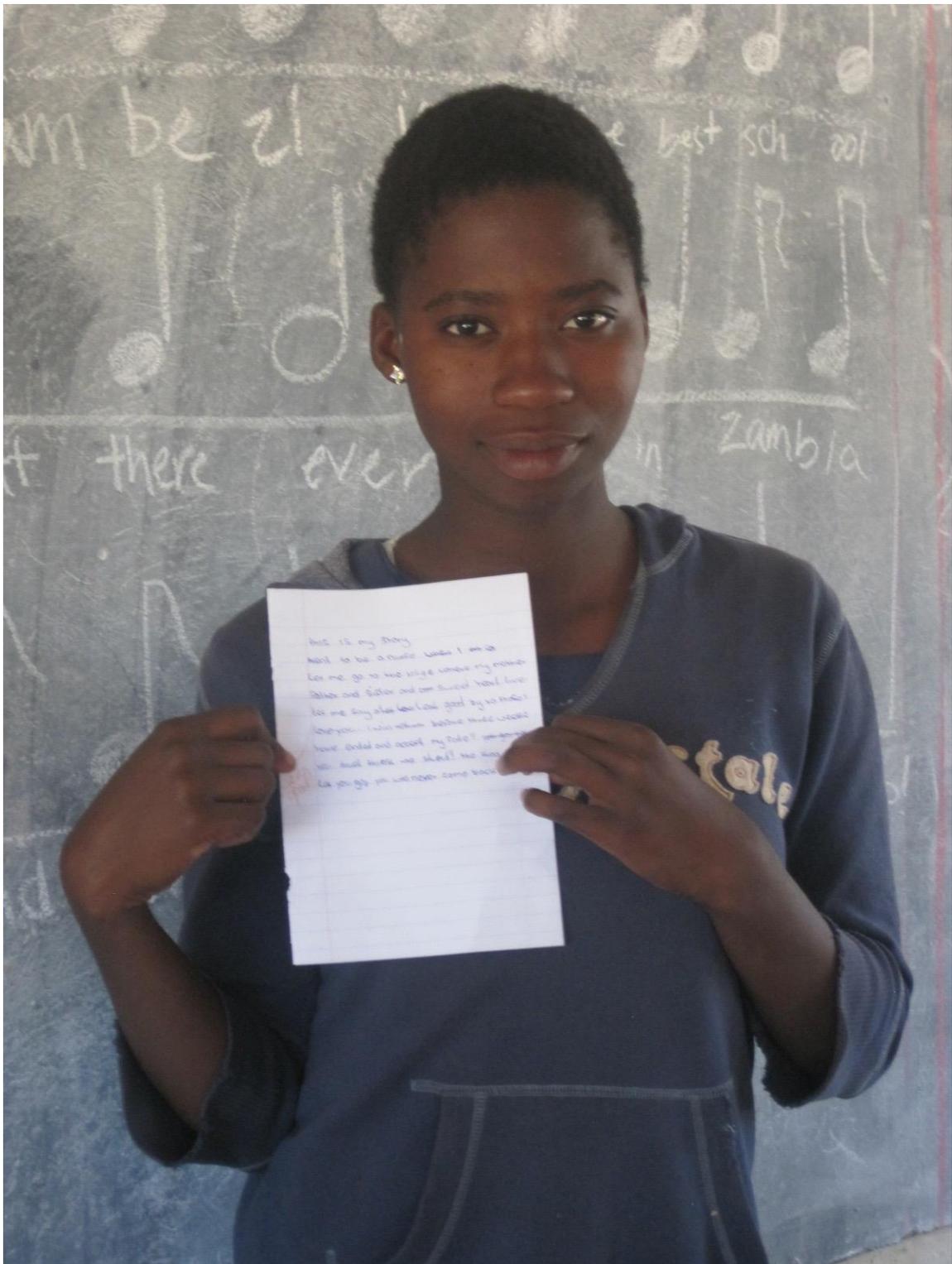
The aspect of the trip that impacted me the most was the volunteering projects we worked on. All of our service was organized under African Impact, an NGO that operates in five African countries. I was so impressed by their ability to enact positive social change for the community. So many things that I have been learning at CSU through my major of International Studies and the President's Leadership Program were applied through the structure and experience of African Impact. First of all, they were careful to serve the community in ways community members wanted, rather than what African Impact thought best. They were careful to support only, and not create dependency. Best of all, they focused on relationships. They fostered relationships between volunteers, project coordinators, and community members. It was these relationships that made my experience very positive and the work I did meaningful.

I quickly realized that I would be most effective in my work if I also focused on relationships rather than only what I was teaching. I started focusing on relationships by taking time to slow down and talk to everyone. I tried to learn and remember the names of each person I was working with. Most of all I tried to be open and caring to every person that crossed my path. Fostering relationships was especially important in a community-centered culture such as Livingstone. I noticed my students responded to me better when I knew more about each of them which led to more successful service. This makes sense; I probably wouldn't care if I got a math problem wrong for some random stranger. But, if that stranger knew my name and I hers, I would be more willing to work because of mutual respect.

However, it is easy to forget simple things like this with a class of 50 students that you are teaching on your own. But once I did, everything else came easier. One of the most valuable lessons I learned was focusing on relationships and people because without those things, other goals lose purpose and meaning if they get completed at all.

I hope to use my understanding of Livingstone and the connections I made through African Impact to continue serving the beautiful community that gave me so many things. I am sure that I will also use the skills I gained throughout college and my career. The trip to Zambia was one of the best things I have ever done. I have no doubt this isn't the last time I'll venture to Africa.

Jo Buckley



Caption:

One of my students, Mary, proudly showing a story she wrote. This was a very hard task for my students, but by my

last day there she had accomplished it and she asked specifically for this picture to be taken.

In Closing Part 2...

2 days of travel, a couple last minute mosquito bites, and a cup of tea later we made it to U.S. of A.

Now that I have some time to evaluate the whole program, I really do think that Zambia was a perfect introduction to Africa. Locals were always friendly, welcoming, and curious. People didn't seem malicious. However, what I'll remember best is the radiating human spirit.

In between helping complete projects and butchering Nyanja [a lingua franca in Zambia] while cracking some smiles in the process, I constantly saw tenacious dreams behind every person's eyes. Maybe this is because when you're away from home, things either seem really, really awesome or really, really terrible, or maybe this is because there actually is a difference in the mindset of Zambians compared to Americans. I'd like to think it's the latter.

This program was built with the focus on sustainability. I thought it was difficult to take a leap of faith into this program, because I didn't know what kind of impact I would make, if at all. On one hand, you don't want to be overbearing and all-mighty, like the 'white man' might be perceived to be, but at the same time you genuinely want to take the time and effort to be a part of something that's needed in the community. Whether it's teaching or healthcare, I think it's vital to keep things in perspective as best as you can. We were lucky to be involved with African Impact, who did follow through with sustainable intentions, but if you aren't, I encourage you to try your best to not

overstep your bounds. It was a challenge for me to accept that the work we were doing was beneficial and not treat it as some living practice field.

The healthcare program didn't really allow for any opportunities to make deep relationships, just small intimate connections along the way. I'm not surprised but I think it did help make leaving easier. I knew someone else would be there to take my place, and I didn't have to say goodbye to anyone. That may sound insensitive, but it just wasn't what my job as health volunteer required of me. I was ok with that. I think that if I hadn't make that realization during the trip, I would have felt somewhat stranded, but that's not the reality of medicine and healthcare. People come, and people go, but if you get the chance to make someone's journey that much better, then you've made an impact. I was lucky enough to leave an impact (however small) and be impacted.

- Alexandra Orahovats



Caption: Ellen Brinks and Acacia Sharrow taking vitals after taking a brief history and chief complaint. This was on home-based care in a very rural area.