

A VACATION THAT TURNS INTO A MISSION TRIP

Written by Janine Parr
Friday, 26 August 2011 08:55

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In early March 2011, Vernon and Loma Wegerer were among a group of twenty four on African Safari to Tanzania with Linda Meadors of Blue Horizon Travel. Upon arriving at the Kilimanjaro Airport, we were met by the Bushdrifters in their five land cruisers. The Bushdrifters is a locally owned company providing transportation and guided tours. We toured national parks, observing thousands of animals in their natural habitat.

The Bushdrifters took us to a grade school that they were building in Babati, Tanzania, approximately 300 km from Arusha. At that time the school had just walls, a roof, and wooden desks, but no teaching supplies. Since then, windows and doors have been added. Many small villages have no school at all.

Ann McConachie, a retired school teacher from Downers Grove, Illinois, was among the Safari group. Ann stayed on in Tanzania to teach English. The children in Babati can speak English but need help with sentence structure and writing. After three weeks, Ann returned to the U.S. with a desire to outfit the school with supplies. Supplies that we take for granted. Among those items are educational books, desks, chairs, teacher desks, world maps, supplies, paper, marker boards, notebooks, story books, educational games, and toys.

Vernon is working with Jordan Catholic School on a new building addition which includes new science, computer, and engineering labs outfitted with the best equipment available. Learning of the needs of the school in Babati, Jordan's administration offered to donate old, unused furniture being stored at the former Sacred Heart School, Rock Island.

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On Friday August 26th, a truck will be loaded with the furniture and sent to Hinsdale, Illinois. It will then be placed in a container and shipped to Arusha, where Bushdrifters will transport the contents to Babati School.

Ann plans to return to Africa in January, 2012, for four months to instruct teachers to be more effective in teaching the English language.

Members of the tour group have established a non-for-profit fund, "AMKA AFRIKA SCHOOL FOUNDATION". Donations will be used to help pay miscellaneous expenses for the school.