

Karina Davis, '08

Marigat, Kenya

This past May I had the amazing opportunity to spend six weeks living and working with four Franciscan nuns in Marigat, Kenya. Marigat is a small town located in Kenya's Rift Valley that is notorious for its extremely hot, dry weather. After a full days journey through the dusty and pot hole ridden road from Nairobi to Marigat, we finally made it to the convent where the Sisters immediately welcomed Patrick and I into their home.



This is the main street that runs through Marigat. The roads were not paved and almost none of the town had running water or electricity. At night, kerosene lamps were used to light the shops and homes and people would have to carry water on their backs from the local rivers to their homes on a daily basis.



Every Thursday Marigat had a huge market where everyone gathered to buy clothing, fruits, vegetables or livestock. Patrick and I would go and help the Sisters shop for the week.

Over the next six weeks, I spent the majority of my time volunteering in a clinic that was run by one of the Sisters we lived with.



This is a picture of the clinic that Patrick and I volunteered at. The clinic included a lab, a pharmacy and check-up rooms all one small building.

In the clinic, which provided the people of Marigat with a wide range of health care needs ranging from lab services to prenatal care, Patrick and I mainly worked weighing babies, giving immunizations, and updating patient records.



One of our main jobs at the clinic was to weight the babies that came in to receive their immunizations. Because the clinic didn't have a real scale, we had to use a produce scale instead.

On Wednesdays and Fridays we would travel miles into the bush in the clinic van to outreach stations where we would set up a make-shift clinic for the day. People would walk for hours just to reach these outreach sites because it was they only access to health care they had. Volunteering in the clinic was such a great opportunity and truly opened my eyes to the desperate situation many Kenyan people are in.



This is a picture of mothers and children waiting to be seen at one of the clinic's outreach stations. The van on the left side of the picture is the vehicle we would take when we ran mobile clinics.



Patrick and I also had the opportunity to volunteer at the local school. Since many of the children couldn't afford any school supplies, we brought markers and coloring books with us which they loved.

Despite their struggles, the people of Marigat were always so friendly and would always walk up to us on the street, shake our hands and welcome us to their town. We were invited to eat at people's houses on several occasions and despite the very little they had they always gave Patrick and I more than we could eat. The Sisters we lived with were also so kind and giving. They truly made me feel like a part of their community. The six weeks I spent in Marigat went by way too fast but I hope to go back someday because it was by far one of the most remarkable experiences of my life.



Our last day in Marigat the Sisters threw a party for us where they slaughtered and roasted a goat our dinner.



All of the Sisters loved to dance and they made Patrick and I dance with them no matter how much we tried to get out of it.