

Marigat, Kenya

In May of 2010, I was fortunate enough to travel to Marigat, Kenya for six weeks to work and live with Franciscan nuns. Marigat is a small town located in the Baringo district of Kenya, which is right near the equator! Although I traveled during my summer break, it was considered winter in Marigat, so the temperature was usually only a mild 90 degrees. The locals told me the temperature could reach 20-30 degrees hotter in the summer!



Marigat is a rural village, filled with small shops and large farms. The villagers and animals share the town, and it is not unusual to see goats or chickens roaming the roads. Most shops have electricity during the day, but people at home usually live without electricity or running water.



A street in Marigat.

While in Kenya, I worked at a clinic with my classmate, Ben DiNovo. Three days a week we stayed at the clinic in Marigat, providing care for the people of the village. The other two days a week we traveled to remote villages in the Baringo district, providing immunizations to people that would not be able to receive healthcare otherwise.



Ben and I with the staff of the Marigat clinic.

My main responsibilities at the clinic were to give immunizations, weigh babies, give prenatal care to expecting mothers, and maintain patient documentation. The clinic also provided lab services to test for diseases such as Malaria and HIV/AIDS, and I was able to help with these services. Although the staff at the clinic wasn't able to provide their patients with the quality of care that we receive, they treated each patient with understanding and respect. Each patient was given unique care, and was treated as a person, rather than just a disease. That is a lesson I hope to take with me as I continue on my journey to becoming a physician.



A group of mothers and children about to receive immunizations. These mothers would walk for miles with their babies on their backs, just so that their children would be able to receive the vaccinations that are needed so desperately for survival. I was able to record the documentation for these children, and provide immunizations for polio, yellow fever, and hepatitis.

When I wasn't working in the clinic, I spent a lot of time playing with the local children. The kids would meet us after school and we would play soccer, or sometimes just share stories about our families and lives back at home. The children also took great pleasure in teaching us what they knew, whether it was about their culture and the Kenyan traditions, or just a few words of Kiswahili. The children lived with practically nothing, and many went home to a house without electricity, water, or even a meal to eat. Yet they were all so friendly and polite, and I couldn't help but fall in love with their jovial spirits.



At the end of my trip, I gave Frisbees, jump ropes and bubbles to the children. Most of them had never seen bubbles before, and were so amused to catch the bubbles on the wands, or to just watch them float away.

Although my time in Kenya was short, the memories I have will last a lifetime. The people of Marigat have taught me that it is not important to be rich in material items, but rather to have a rich heart. Though these people lived with such little amenities, they had plenty of something much more important: *love*. The love they showed towards God, their neighbors and their families was so overwhelming. I only hope that I can share this message with my family and friends, and that I can spread their ideals to others.