



I left my heart in Marigat,  
Kenya.

As I attempt to share my experiences with you, I would like to tell you first that these words will not and could never do justice to the spirit, the life, the poverty, and the love that exists in Marigat, Kenya. With that said, I will begin, most naturally, at the beginning😊



It was a long two days of travel for me to get from my home in the Pacific to Nairobi, Kenya. After

an overnight stay at a Catholic home, one of the sisters came to pick us up the following morning. With the Jeep packed full with our seven bags, filled with medical supplies and items for donation, I and my two other classmates, Katie Williams and Michael Ashamalla, managed to find a seat and began our two journey North to Marigat.

## **The Journey To Marigat and First Impressions**

Being my first time in any African country, I did not know what to expect. The landscape

was breathtaking. From cruising through the

wide-open plains to driving high above the

famous Great Rift Valley, to seeing grazing

zebra  
and  
wild  
baboons  
on the  
side of  
the  
road,  
the  
entire  
ride to

Marigat  
was a



fantastic first impression of the country of Kenya. After approximately two hours and a brief stop in the city of Nakuru, where we purchased toiletries etc. with our newly exchanged Kenya Shillings, we slowed down and made a slight right onto a bumpy road lined with small shops, women selling produce, and men working on bikes. There were goats everywhere. The road and the building were dusty. The sun was beating down on the children running in their school uniforms. We were in Marigat.





## **Our House**

The four of us, Michael Ashamalla, Antony Mathew, Katie Williams, and I shared a

small house on the convent property. We

each had a bed and used mosquito nets to

keep the bugs at bay while we slept. We

purchased electric fans to make the night

heat more bearable, and could not have

survived without our fly swatter and can of

bug spray. From moths to scorpions, roaches



to ants, spider to bugs I have never seen

before, we were always surrounded by

critters.









# **The Sisters**





Before my experience in Kenya, I had never come in contact with a Catholic nun. My expectations of what living with the sisters would be like came from movies and

television shows from my youth. It was nothing like what I expected. **THE SISTERS WERE AWESOME.** These have to be the craziest, funniest, most playful and loveable sisters in the world. Always singing and laughing, these sisters, each with their own strong personality, are a cross between Whoopy Goldberg, from *The Sister Act*, and the American comedian Wanda Sykes. They became our family in Kenya. We shared every meal and spent every night with them watching nail-biting tele-novellas and the most exciting East African Singing Competition. With each day, we loved each other more, and every day since I have returned from Kenya, I have kept them in my heart and in my prayers. These sisters do amazing things for the Marigat Community. They are leaders and servers of the community. Each sister has her own project, running a school, creating and maintaining agricultural programs, providing aid for the ill and the elderly, and managing and

serving as the chief of a clinic for mothers

and children.











# **The Amenities**

We did not have a flushing toilet in our

house because we did not have running

water. We had to manually flush the toilet



with buckets of water that we retrieved from the spigot on the property of the convent. We showered every night in the Convent where the sisters slept. The water was cold

but after a hot day in the sun, showers were

refreshing. We hand washed our laundry

with the spigot water and hung our clothes



to dry on a clothesline we brought with us.

Life was good in Marigat.









# **The People**

I promised Mark, a man from Nakuru,



Kenya, that I would tell the entire world

about my experiences with Kenyans.

Kenyans are some of the nicest people I have ever met. Of course, in any big city one must practice common sense and be aware, but every



Kenyan that I encountered was genuinely a nice/friendly person. The people of Marigat were smiley and generous. They were eager to learn about our culture and proud to share their culture. The children were amazing and inspiring. They loved to be in school and were so happy to share their knowledge,

games, and stories with us. They taught us

how to dance, Kenyan style, and always

waved at us when we saw them in town.

Once, Katie, Michael, and I walked a group

of girls home one afternoon. We walked



deep into the neighborhood of tin-homes and

plywood shacks and after saying good-bye

to the last girl, we managed to find our way

back to the main road. Suddenly we heard a

small voice and fast footsteps behind us,

“for you, for you!” she was saying. We

turned around to see one of the little girls

running behind us to give us a sweet (candy-



gum) for walking her home. Marigat is a

small, poor town. Most of these people have



very little after paying school fees and putting food on the table. This small piece of gum meant more to me than the most expensive gift money could buy.





# The Service

Going to Kenya, I assumed my major

service project would be working in the





medical clinic. In the clinic, we weighed babies by wrapping them up in their mother's shawls and hanging them from grocery scales. We recorded the weights in giant record books and wrote in new weights and recorded necessary vaccines on the child's "card" which served as both a birth certificate and collection of health records. We were able to give the babies vitamin A

doses and vaccines for various diseases. We saw many sick children and dedicated mothers, who would often walk an entire day to the mobile clinic site. The mobile clinics were an experience, to say the least. We would sometimes drive hours on the worst roads I have ever been on to set up the clinic on a pile of rocks under a large tree. Once, we drove for two hours, up a mountain through the mud to find that the only road to the clinic site, impassible due to heavy rains the night before. There was no cellular connection and no way to tell the women who were probably waiting that we would not be there with to treat them. The children would have to wait another month to receive their vaccines, and mothers would have to wait another month to receive blood work and any other health care they needed. In the afternoons, we spent time with the children from the primary schools. We played games, soccer, did crafts, played with bubbles, danced, and just hung out. The

children are so loving and have such pure, honest hearts. They were so curious about us in the beginning, examining our skin, our hair, our clothes. Eventually, however, we built relationships and became a part of their life. My only regret is that I only had 6 weeks to spend with them and could not share more time with each of them. We also were able to join one of the sisters on her “walks.” We would walk for 3-4 hours in the morning, before the sun was too brutal, through the outskirts of the Marigat district. She would bring food, soap, and other things she thought might be needed on the walk. She would visit her “clients,” people that relied on her programs to survive. Some of them were recovering from severe illnesses such as meningitis or debilitating infections. She had handicapped clients and very elderly clients. During one trip, we assisted Sister in washing, feeding, and changing crippled Gogo (meaning grandmother in Kiswahili) who could no longer walk. On

these walks through the barren bush, shacks

were scattered on the red, sun-baked dirt.

These homes were made of twigs tied

together, and if one had more money, they

could afford corrugated tin. I had never seen



this level of poverty before, nor since, this

trip to Kenya.







I left my heart in Kenya. I left it with the  
sister. I left it with the children. I left it with

the villagers. I left it with the bugs. I left it with the goats. I left my heart there, but came back with so much knowledge, strength, and love. All of which were gifts given to me by the people of Marigat, Kenya. I will never forget what I learned there, what I witnessed there, and all the people I met and faces I saw. I left my heart in Kenya; All that means is that I HAVE to go back.