

August 23, 2010

Hello!

After a great weekend in Accra, I was happy to get back to the orphanage to try out new lessons and games with the kids. A group of volunteers recently donated two decks of flashcards to the orphanage - one covering animals and another covering flags of the world - so we decided to have a fun lesson in which the younger kids learned about and drew pictures of animals, while the older kids did the same with flags.

We continue to play geography hangman on the white board, with the kids picking countries on the globe and the others guessing letters to form country names. We also had a math lesson this week, which proved to be incredibly difficult, considering that many of the children are at different levels. The ~~unstructured~~ unstructured nature of the lessons is still quite stressful, and I often have to remind myself that conducting some sort of lesson, in which the kids are learning and engaged, is

certainly better than no lesson at all.

For the rest of the day after the lesson, I continue getting to know the children and their interests, and I try to turn those interests into activities that are fun and, ideally, educational in some way. I do a lot of reading,

drawing and singing with the kids

(their favorite songs include "Jesus Loves Me," "Jingle Bells" and "Waving Flag," a very popular song during the World Cup).

I also play a ridiculous amount of soccer. While it is admittedly embarrassing that my soccer skills are nowhere near the level of most of the eight to ten-year-olds at the orphanage, it is still a lot of fun playing with them, and it's a great way to get to know them better, as well.

Early this week, I spent an afternoon after volunteering shopping at the wood market in Abra, a town about 30 minutes from Kuamoso.

I took buying an outrageously number of items (including wooden bowls and utensils, jewelry and a kente cloth scarf) to learn the importance of price

negotiation. Prices at markets in Ghana are rarely set in stone, and sometimes shopkeepers even look confused when you don't attempt to bargain with them. I have grown very accustomed to negotiating prices with taxi drivers, as well, as many will try to take advantage of foreigners who are unfamiliar with the normal rates.

Also, I have now learned that many Ghanaians are willing to give free rides to anyone who flags them down from the side of the road. I have gotten free rides with everything from trucks carrying bushels of produce to vans selling herbal supplements. One of my housemates inadvertently hitched a free ride with the chief of Akropong, a nearby town, and he proceeded to take her to his palace and show her around.

This weekend, several other volunteers and I made a trip to the Volta Region, which is about

far hors east of Kwamiso. We stayed at a pleasant hotel with a real, if cold, shower and a flush toilet (we were all very excited), and we spent our day Saturday climbing to the upper Wli Falls. Considering how much mountain-climbing experience I have (none), I was not surprised by how incredibly difficult the three hour, severely steep climb was for me. But the waterfalls were breathtaking and definitely worth the hike.

All the Best,

Abby