



Shalina, Dr. Mohsin & Ali Jaffer

A Universal Language

Rotary & Weston Family Cross Borders to Change Lives

by Jerry Gomez

One could say the Jaffers are representative of your typical Weston family. Leading successful and comfortable lives like many of us, their charitable endeavors in their native Kenya have brought about a new perspective on life. University of Miami students Ali and Shalina's lives were changed two summers ago during a trip to Mombassa. As Shalina reminisces, "We have a lot of family and friends in Kenya who work with the Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya (APDK). That's how we got involved."

Rather than spending their summer in self-consumption, like most of their age peers, Ali and Shalina traversed unpaved roads through a long journey to reach APDK's facilities in order to provide a lending hand. "We saw kids with all sorts of disabilities, the facility provided them with therapy sessions, teaches them English, has rehabilitation rooms and a prosthesis center. It is very complete" says Ali.

Literally helping those disabled get back on their feet, APDK tracks kids through their lives, helps them integrate and change burdened lives. Dr. Mohsin Jaffer, provides some background insight. "It's a cultural problem in many African societies. A physical disability is a shame for the family, considered to be a punishment from God," Shalina adds, "Many of these conditions can be cured at an early age, they're easy to fix." By helping avoid these children a lifetime of stigmatization and suffering, the clinic performs surgeries, follows up on medical care as well as capacitate and train them for jobs later in life, going above and beyond a hackneyed definition of charity. Dr. Jaffer comments, "It changed my children's lives to work with these disabled individuals. Their spirit changed

lucky. We saw neighborhoods and conditions that are so poor and unkempt, they're surreal." Besides visiting many of these children, Ali and Shalina helped with some of the workshops, helped serve them and taught English.

Upon returning to Florida, the Jaffer children couldn't stop thinking about their summer: they convinced their dad to get involved. Dr. Jaffer, a Weston Rotarian received backing from the Rotary Club of Weston, and in true Rotarian form, through matching funds and an equal warm reception from Mombassa's Rotary Club, what was a small donation to APDK grew exponentially to become a whopping two million Kenyan shillings which financed fifty surgeries for children with disabilities. The Jaffers returned to Kenya this past Christmas, and to their surprise many of the children remembered them.

"There was this child, Adanan, and I was very fond of him. He was missing a leg and he was the leader of the younger children. Yet he had no self-pity at all, he was always excited, proud and enthusiastic," says Ali. Shalina adds, "It's incredible, we have so much yet complain a lot, it puts it in perspective, many of these children have been abandoned, yet they're so joyful, very content. It touches you." Planning more surgeries for this year, I ask Ali how they communicated with the children. He responds, "We spoke some English, used sign language, I guess we communicated through some sort of universal language." Indeed, the language of caring is undeniably a universal one. For more