



Making a Difference: Orphans in Zambia

Marlena Bellavia is the daughter of Kiwanians Pierre and Leen Inghels in Bend Oregon. With the support of the Kiwanis Club of Bend OR, she is in Zambia to help with the last details for the opening of the first Vima Lupwa (family) Home orphanage that will be home to 12-15 orphans.

When Marlena first arrived in Zambia, only the shell of the house was complete. She and others have worked on completing the house. For Marlena, conditions have been challenging – the heat, the lack of water, and... cockroaches. But this is...

Melody's Story

The first child to arrive in Vima Lupwa Home was little Melody, the inspiration child who started the whole effort in Bend of building a home for orphans in Zambia. Weighing barely 45 lbs on a tiny mal- and undernourished 12-year-old body, her story is not an uncommon one.

Orphaned by the ravages of AIDS, she was one of 15 others living with their widowed grandmother trying her best to provide shelter in a one-room mud hut – a home without electricity, no water, and rarely any food. Once daily the children would walk the nutrition center in the hopes of obtaining a bowl of nshima [the basic white cornmeal mush] for all of them to share as their one meal a day.

Melody, one of the oldest children [9 years old at the time] rarely attended school as she was left in charge of

the younger children while grandmother would go to market with a few vegetables she grew in the hopes of selling them. Melody's "duties" included watching over the younger children, fetching water at the well, cleaning the house and grounds and tending to the garden. As the nutrition center was only open during weekdays, the children most often went with little or no food on weekends.

What a celebration for all of us that Melody was the first child placed in our home by the Zambian Social Welfare officer. On the first night in Vima Lupwa Home, Melody snuck into the kitchen in the middle of the night and gobbled down almost two dozen eggs – needless to say, she was extremely ill for a few days. A few nights later a strange crackling noise came from her bed, and upon checking on her, she was discovered sucking and chewing up the bones of the chicken they'd had for supper that night. During the days she would grab a broom and sweep the

house and yard, thinking that in order to stay in her new home required her to continue to serve everyone.

She is slowly becoming reassured that she is in a permanent home where she will not have to steal, sneak or beg for food ever again.

Further adjustments have included assuring Melody that she is in a safe home, with a bed of her own including sheets, blankets, a pillow and a mosquito net, two sets of clothes, with parents Violet and Mwala who love her, where she will have plenty of meals (three per day) and go to school until she has finished her education. Having been to school only haphazardly before, she now is the proud

owner of a uniform and has started grade 3 at the age of 11.

One child at a time – we are helping make a difference. One child at a time who will in turn help make a difference for other Zambian children.

For more information, visit: www.lupwahomes.org

Submitted by Leen Inghels



Above: Melody, before and after; pictures at right, starting at the top: children participate in an oral hygiene class; planting a lemon tree; a child shows off a painting.