

Michaels to travel to Uganda on missions trip

Written by Jes-c Brandt



Jeff and Tricia Michael of Holyoke are in the final stages of preparation for a two-week missions trip to Africa. The couple will be traveling with eight other men and women from Evangelical Free Church in Grant, Neb.

Behind this particular missions trip is Children's HopeChest, an organization based out of Colorado Springs. HopeChest is dedicated to helping orphans through sponsorships and trips such as this one.

While on the mission, the group will be laying the groundwork for an orphanage in a village called Kayango in Uganda. Projects will include a well, kitchen and bathroom to get the facility started.

In addition to the construction work they'll be doing, the missionaries will be holding various events for the local people. For pastors in the area, there will be a pastoral conference focusing on discipleship training for the men. Women will be invited to seminars that address a woman's worth in God. A five-day kids' club will be offered for the children, and organizers are planning for 500-800 children to be in attendance.

Work to be done in Kayango is centered on 100 specific children. Individuals from Grant Evangelical Free Church have volunteered to financially sponsor these children, and now they are sending missionaries to continue providing assistance. Jeff and Tricia, while in Africa, will have the special opportunity to meet the 7-year-old girl they have been sponsoring.

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When the 10 Americans arrive in Uganda, they will be giving the 100 children sandals and Bibles, as well as toys and children's books. While they are excited to give to those children, Tricia acknowledges one of the most difficult parts of the trip will be seeing hundreds of other children in need. They hope to take as much extra as possible for additional children, but recognize they can only do so much.

As their Jan. 13 departure draws near, the Michaels reflect on all the events leading up to this trip. The two have been involved in mission work in Mexico and Jamaica in the past, but the opportunity to serve in Africa is a new experience that has been a dream for quite some time. Since she was a child, Tricia has felt called to go to Africa, and is amazed that all the pieces are now falling in place for her and her husband to go.

Early last year, Tricia had a strong feeling that she should go to Uganda. In a casual conversation with their friend Rick Cleaver, Jeff found out about the team from Grant. Plans quickly came together, and the Michaels began to prepare. The two have been busy praying, fund raising and meeting with the other eight missionaries weekly to discuss their goals, plans and what to expect while abroad.

In their meetings, cultural differences have been one major topic of conversation. The team has been advised that there are different expectations of women in their culture, and the team should expect to dress and act differently than what they may be used to. Also, while most adults speak English, children are generally in the processes of learning, so they may encounter a language barrier there. Other differences they are expecting are life without electricity or running water, and a large Muslim population.

Despite all their planning, both noted they really don't know what to expect, but they are eager to see what God has in store for them. At this point, they are prayerfully considering further work in the mission field, and are waiting with open hearts and minds to see where they will go in the future.