



Elizabeth McCabe

Dietetics

When I applied to go to Malawi with Coventry University, I had not considered that leaving my family for almost a month might cause me any anxiety. As the trip got closer, this became one of my concerns. However, once in Malawi, I was surprised to find that, even as a mother, I never missed anything from home. There was too much distraction. So much to see. So much to experience.

The experiences I gained have been life changing and character building. As a mature student, I have acquired much of my character and beliefs through previous life and work experiences. I can say with true conviction that this trip confirmed to me that nobody is ever too old to learn and develop.

I did not know any of the people I travelled with, but by the end of my journey, I have made friends for life. We are all bonded by our mutual respect for our different personalities and by the fact that only we can truly understand the journey we have been on. There are certain members in Team DASH, who are true team players. Whilst climbing Mount Mulanje, one particular member demonstrated their utter selflessness whilst motivating and helping others on their challenge. Climbing a mountain gives you the unique opportunity to see people's characters whilst also learning more about one's self.

I have been inspired by the endless and selfless work of our hosts, Fisherman's Rest. They orchestrate the logistics for community projects they support. The local people do not have the problem solving skills required to develop and complete these projects. Through Fisherman's Rest and with volunteer support, like that of Team DASH, the surrounding community can benefit. I am so proud to have been part of this team and these projects.

Whilst in Malawi, I achieved a tangible sense of satisfaction. I witnessed at grass roots level the difference our work made. While teaching children from the Malawi school syllabus, I could fully appreciate the challenges for pupils and teaching staff alike. Having a class of 130 eager but restricted pupils made me somewhat frustrated but I reflected on the positives of this experience instead of the things I could not change. These children will never forget the day they had people from the UK teach them.

Being stimulated by our enthusiastic and varied teaching methods will hopefully inspire some of these students to strive for an education. I hope that I have left behind a glimpse of how education can make a difference and that at least some of these students are motivated to learn more. The teachers were also inspired by our sessions. Due to their

limited resources, they asked to keep all of our lesson plans and learning aids, in order to use them for future classes.



The experiences I gained in Malawi, from visiting the healthcare to playing in a nursery, have all contributed to my self-development. Even walking around a village with children holding my hand has made a difference to my character. These and other countless experiences have inspired me to do more for people in developing countries. Actually visiting a developing country like Malawi has affirmed to me that I have some of the skills and knowledge to contribute to their needs more effectively. By experiencing a culture first hand, I have a greater understanding of some of the causes and can now identify some of the things I can do to help. It feels more productive and therefore satisfying to give my time to make some changes. I can see the results. I can see the difference my time made. I will return to Malawi again, the warm heart of Africa will keep my heart warm forever.



Asha, Liz and Bryony on Lake Malawi