

Our Volunteering Experience in Gyetiase

by volunteer child nurse, Nicky Bennett

My friend, Anna, and I have just returned from volunteering in Gyetiase and had such a fantastic time no words can describe! I had previously been the year before and on arrival all the children remembered us and were instantly drawn to knowing all about Anna. After meeting the chiefs of the village and discussing our work plans we were able to begin our journey.

Each day before school, on breaks and after school the children were looking for us to play and give them the attention many of them do not usually receive. Seeing their faces and watching them enjoy activities we organised for them made the journey even more special.

A general day for us included running a clinic for children who usually did not have national health insurance and needed some kind of medical treatment or advice. We were able to help many children at the clinic. However one child troubled us, and we ended up taking him to the local hospital. After a wait of approximately five hours in the hospital queue and seeing many sights that we would never have dreamed of seeing, he was able to be admitted to a poorly furnished children's ward and receive treatment he so urgently needed. The child was drained of energy and not interested in any kind of interaction. Going back the next day and seeing the child looking so well, alert and full of energy was such a fantastic feeling. While waiting for him to be discharged we took some bubbles and

Also in Gyetiase ...

A new primary school building to replace the structurally very unsafe old building was completed in the April 2010.

It was funded by the British and Foreign Schools' Society and the Leggatt Trust provided it with teaching equipment.

Laptops

... if you've got an old one you don't want, we've got a volunteer computer person who would service it before we took it to Ashanti



Nicky, Anna and the children

colouring paper, and played with some of the other children on the ward to distract them. Just those short moments made such a difference.

At the weekends, we spent the day playing with nearly all of the children in the village. In the evenings we hung out with 16 to 22 year olds who usually don't spend much time with the volunteers. For them to go to work and school the next day and say they had been hanging out with 'white people' meant that each evening we would have some of their friends coming to meet us and say hi. These young people were so well mannered and keen to learn about our culture and way of life as well as teach us about their lives. When playing with the children, the parents and older people in the village would gather and stare at how we were interacting with the children and end up joining in if we were able to persuade them.

Spending so much time with these children made it difficult to say goodbye. On our last day approximately one hundred children were there to say goodbye and send us off. We hope to return to this village once again and continue to meet so many fantastic people.

Not only did we spend time in this village, we also spent time in the capital Accra, where we met a group of university students who were able to show us many sights and take us to all the local parties.

Our trip was such a fantastic experience, and we look forward to the next visit. We are currently raising money to finance the free school meals, and I have made and sold 150 calendars and am running the half marathon with a team of people.

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Registered charity no.1133517
Company no. 7113261
registered in England and Wales
www.ashanti-development.org

***Dancers and musicians
from the Royal Ballet***

will perform the Third Ashanti Fund-Raising Gala Evening at 7.30pm on Sunday September 19. It will be at the Britten Theatre, Royal College of Music, Prince Consort Road, London SW7 2BS. Tickets (£28) are available from the box office (0207 591 4314).

Last year, Sergei Polunin, Mara Galeazzi, Emma Maguire, Lara Turk, Gary Avis and Ryoichi Hirano all danced for us, and many of them will do so again this year.

Please let us know if you'd like a flyer. Otherwise, we'll email you an A4 poster nearer the time.