

# Davis family inspired to 'come and see'

Marie and Curt Davis hopes tales of their many international relief trips will teach others how they can help

By Jolene Guzman  
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Marie Davis has completed 49 relief trips to countries facing crisis — many times in the company of her husband, Curt Davis, and other family members.

Marie and Curt, of Dallas, returned from Uganda in early May after spending a month working in clinics at the United Nations' Nakevale Refugee Center. They made the trip as part of a Medical Teams International contingent. MTI is a Christian global health organization.

Marie, a nurse, and Curt, an electrician, offer skills and knowledge to desperate people in needy countries while they are there, but, in their opinion, that isn't the most critical thing they share.

"People have said to me before, 'Why would you spend \$5,000 through an organization to send you and your husband to stay a month in Uganda?'" she said. "Why don't you just give them the money and let them care of that?"

Her answer: "Mother Teresa had a saying, 'Come and see.'"

They are following that directive, but they are also being the eyes for people who can't take the time to do what they do.

"Come and see gives us an insight into what it is that we need to tell people," Marie said. "Plus, I'm a nurse and he's an electrician, so we can do some work. But better than that, we come and see. See what they have to go through. What they have to live through. What is it that they need?"

She said when they return, their goal is to inspire others to care, to give, or even more fundamentally, to be aware of what is happening half a world away.

"We talk to people and ask them if they know anything about South Sudan and the refugees," Curt said. "A lot of them don't know anything."

Marie said that the problem can seem so overwhelming that people don't know where to begin to help, so they tune out.

"Unfortunately, through no fault except for our own, we become weary of poverty," Marie said. "MTI is an avenue through which they can do something about it."

Uganda's refugee camps take in thousands of



MARIE DAVIS / for the Itemizer-Observer

Curt Davis with a group of refugees he met at the camp in Southwestern Uganda. An electrician, Kurt had time to talk with people while he waited for his project approval.

refugees per week fleeing drought, violence or war.

While there, the couple met people from South Sudan, Congo, Somalia, Rwanda, Tanzania and other neighboring countries.

Many of the refugees are from South Sudan, which Marie said is experiencing both drought and violence over land. A new country, after Sudan split due to a civil war, it is struggling mightily in its infancy.

"It's just been absolute hell," Marie said.

Uganda takes the refugees in exchange for payment from the U.N. The U.N. owns the clinics, and provides medicine, vaccines, supplies, food and material for housing in the camp.

"Though not enough, because it is impossible to plan for the number of refugees coming over," Marie said.

The food and supplies are basic. Homes are made from mud brick with tarps for roofs.

"They throw sticks and old tires, whatever they have to keep their roof from blowing away," Curt said. The U.N. gives the people supplies to grow gardens to feed themselves, but without irrigation, that is a seasonal solution.

"They are trying to encourage these folks to grow

their own crops and do what they can to feed themselves, which is a good thing, especially when you are talking about long-term," Marie said. "But they are always hungry."

Malnutrition means they struggle to off disease, most often malaria, even with the efforts to distribute mosquito nets. Sometimes people get so hungry, they sell the nets for food.

Curt became the team's "diplomat" because the electrical project he was assigned didn't get cleared. He met a young man named Grace, who fled Congo with his mother and two little sisters.

He said someone accused his father of working with the resistance, and the government sent people to kill him. They also set fire to a building Grace and his uncle were working in, killing his uncle. Grace escaped, but suffered burns in the fire.

Grace said his family is grateful for a welcoming country.

"Grace said, 'At least we have life,'" Curt said. "If they didn't live there, they would be somewhere where their life would be in danger all the time."

Marie said MTI workers try promote peace and im-

prove the lives of women in the countries they work in. That is starting with surgeries and treatments for obstetric fistulas, caused by trauma during child birth that can lead to incontinence.

"There's a social stigma. These women are not only outcast by their husbands and their families, but by all of society," Maria said. "They are like lepers."

Marie said many of the



MARIE DAVIS / for the Itemizer-Observer

Marie Davis with patients at the United Nations Nakevale Refugee Center in Uganda during her visit in April.

medical professionals working in the clinics — from many countries and religions — shun the differences that could separate them in favor of accomplishing a collective goal: to heal.

Marie said she worked with a young Muslim who specializes in pediatrics. The two made a connection and stay in contact.

"Here I am a Christian working with a Muslim —

and didn't even know it for the first week — and what a compassionate good, good man," Marie said. "Many of us in health care have concluded that we can create peace because we seem to have the compassion and understanding and the acceptance of all people, pretty much. I would sure like see that continue."

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