

Kindness in
South Africa



Kindness in South Africa

By: Joyce Huang

Kindness is wisdom. Someone who is kind has the ability to glimpse past the trivial distractions that occupy their own life, to recognize an issue that is of consequence whether to an infant or to a whole country, and to lend a hand out of genuine care and benevolence. An act of kindness is an act of selflessness. It is sacrificing one's time and effort to do the right thing and help someone else, however big or small the action is. Growing up in a privileged community, I have constantly been reminded that a little bit of kindness can go a long way. Many people do not realize the impression of kindness on humans. Humans, after all, are emotional beings, and by nature, we are appreciative of compassion and empathy. I have learned the importance of kindness little by little, but there has been one experience that surpasses all others in so many ways.

This March, I embarked on a two-week trip to South Africa with a group of 14 other students and chaperones from my school, Noble and Greenough School. So many aspects of the trip radiated kindness, whether it came from my colleagues on the trip or from South Africans we met during our time there. Aside from collaborating with a non-profit organization called RV United in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, we also stayed at Rocky Road, a hostel that Nobles has been going to for the past decade or so, while working in a village called Kurland. For the latter part of the trip, we had the honor of working with a man named Mac. Mac is undoubtedly the epitome of kindness. He has dedicated over half of his life to helping others, specifically the village of Kurland. He explained to us that there are a lot of other similar villages in South Africa that cannot afford to maintain public facilities and the village in general, so he tries to do as much as possible to help them out on that front. To this day, he is still so eager to do whatever he can to help the village, and his energy really helped motivate and inspire us while we were there too.



Pictured: Mac speaking to us about the Kurland projects.

Here are a few excerpts of the journal entries I kept from this immensely captivating and illuminating adventure:

March 14th, 2019

“Today was our first day renovating one of Kurland's two preschools, and even though we all got so burnt from the harsh sun, it felt so good doing labor that was actually beneficial to a community.

Mac, one of the permanent residents at Rocky Road, acted as our project manager and tour guide. Throughout the decades he's lived at Rocky Road, he has established a connection with the governing committee of the Kurland village. Members of the committee assign him certain tasks that are necessary to the upkeep of the village, and he, occasionally with the help of people like us, completes them. For the next few days, we are at Mac's disposal to work on a number of projects at the two preschools in the village.”

March 15th, 2019

“Today, we finished painting the fence at the smaller preschool, and it felt like such a huge achievement! Since our work at this preschool was done, Mr. Heider brought Elizabeth, Emily, and I over to the other preschool where everyone else was working. The fence there was a lot longer as this preschool was bigger, and we also had to paint the cement wall that supported the iron gate.”



March 18th, 2019

“Today was our last full day at Rocky Road, and we spent it wrapping up the Kurland projects. I worked with Gwen, Alex, and Mac on a bunch of different small tasks, and we were so caught up in our work that we returned to Rocky Road almost 2 hours later than everyone else.

This morning, my first task at Kurland was to take polaroids of the children at each daycare. Maya and I each took about forty pictures, and it was so chaotic, but I think we handled everything really well. It was so great getting to really interact with the kids one last time, especially in this specific setting because they were all so excited to get their pictures. Seeing them so happy warmed my heart.”