



# SCHOOL'S OUT AT FCYF!

## FAIR CHILDREN YOUTH FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER 2011

### Where did this year go?!

2011 has been our busiest year since FCYF was founded in 2003. We have so much to share with you:

Read about FCYF's Child-Headed Household Knitting Co-op on pages 2-3

Find out what Wisdom Primary and Nursery School are up to on page 4

Follow cookery training pioneers from the Deaf Children Center on page 5

Hear about a novel fundraising project in Minnesota on page 6

Learn about 'culture shock' on pages 7-8

Find 'Intercordia at home' on page 9

Enjoy adventures of Think Money Team Rwanda 2011 on pages 10-11

### Inspired by these stories to

**DONATE? It's so easy at:** [http://](http://www.firstgiving.com/fundraiser/)

[www.firstgiving.com/fundraiser/](http://www.firstgiving.com/fundraiser/)

[FairChildrenYouthFoundation/](http://FairChildrenYouthFoundation/)

[FAIRCHILDRENYOUTHFOUNDATION](http://FAIRCHILDRENYOUTHFOUNDATION)



**Above: Volunteers Kat, Monique and Jemma get a new angle on life in making new Rwandan friends!**

Our 2011 FCYF newsletter comes to you through the stories of our volunteers. They hail from many countries. Some come by themselves or after signing up with our partners 2WayDevelopment or AfID. Others join supervised college student and business groups.

Hosting volunteers can put heavy pressure on a small foundation like FCYF, which still has such slender means with which to meet pressing community needs.

It's so good to look at these shining faces above and share the stories that follow with you. They remind us all what a healthy local and global community we are busy creating together!



### HOME STAYS FOR VOLUNTEERS:

They require more organization and supervision than volunteer placements at the volunteer center, but Stephanie tells you just what a great experience they can be (page 9)



### ANCIENT LIFE IS BETTER THAN

**MODERN LIFE::**An accountant fresh from one of the world's foremost financial institutions is astonished by the composure and debating skills of Wisdom Primary School's 9-11 year olds (page 4)



### READY FOR EAR TESTING?

Because Director Louis and team at the Deaf Children's Center have done so much to reassure these children, they feel safe to meet Jane (page 11)

# BLOGSPOT 1

We thank Jemma Hogwood and Rachael Shopland for letting us share some favorite moments from their 2011 blogs with you here.

They offer a vivid picture of daily life in FCYF and the effect this can have upon a volunteer who comes 'from a different world'

## Jemma's Blog



Many FCYF volunteers keep online blogs while they are in Musanze. Writing a blog is an easy and practical way to keep friends and family in touch with their day-to-day lives, and gives an opportunity for volunteers to step back regularly, reflect on and internalize their experiences. A blog can serve as a valuable journal record both for FCYF and the volunteers, long after they have left Rwanda. Blogging can also be a great way to tell the Foundations's story, stimulate wider interest and awareness, and also raise funds for the many hundreds of marginalized children in Musanze who still desperately need access to basic human rights

## Tuesday, 4 January 2011: The Child-Headed Household Co-operative and a Small Plea

Recently I have been really pleased to see that they (2010 training graduates who have formed a co-operative) are thinking about making a living and have managed to come up with some ideas. Instead of relying on tourists visiting the shop they have been talking to people in their villages and some of the girls have been commissioned work. Two girls have come with material and used the sewing machines to make skirts, others are knitting school jumpers and a small group have started to make big woven mats which many people use here in Rwanda (I have one in my bedroom and now treat it with respect after learning how they are made and how much time and energy is put into them!). I am really encouraged by this as I think that to make any money they will need to find business within Rwanda itself rather than relying on tourists. There are many co-operatives in Rwanda and I think the majority of them struggle but I am also pretty sure that there is more to these organizations than just making money.

However, in working with these girls two days a week and getting to know them slowly despite our lack of a common language, I wanted to ask you all for help. The project has a knitting machine on which the girls learn to knit woolen sweaters – once they have learnt the technique and the pattern, they are quick and easy to make and of high quality. There is a lot of potential as most children need a jumper for school. The problem is that the co-operative cannot always use the machine as the group of girls that are still training have priority over it.

I had the idea of raising the money to provide them with their own machine for the co-operative so that they can make school jumpers. I am writing this reluctantly as I hate asking for money... but I was wondering if any of you would be interested in donating a few pounds? The machine costs about £170 which isn't a massive amount but the project struggles to fund materials like needles and wool so this would be a massive investment for them. It would be fantastic if I could present it to them before I leave. So, I am just putting it out there... please either ignore this last bit and continue to enjoy my blog or if you wish, e-mail me. Thanks everyone and Happy New Year!!

## **BLOGSPOT 1: Jemma's Blog** contd.

### **Wednesday, 9 March 2011: Knitting Machines**

The Child Headed Household co-operative is going from strength to strength. Numbers have dwindled somewhat but a regular number of girls are really dedicated and are reaping the rewards of their determination and hard work. I want to say a massive thank you to all of you who donated money towards buying the co-operative a knitting machine. They were delighted when it arrived and many of them have been able to find jobs to make a few jumpers. However, with the start of the school term came the knitting of a big batch of jumpers for the deaf school. Some of the co-operative members come in to work every day (rather than the two days they had originally agreed to). It has been a great success and they are managing to earn quite a bit of money from it (although if you convert their daily earnings into pounds it seems pitifully little).

One girl bought new school uniform for her younger sibling, others have bought school books for siblings, material to make a new skirt, soap and washing powder. Even better news is that donations are still coming in and I now have enough money to buy the co-operative a second machine. This is great as, when they get a big job, one machine is just not enough. Elie and Bernadette came to visit the other day and were so impressed by the work that they think of commissioning the co-operative to make school jumpers for Wisdom Primary School as well. This would bring in a lot more work (with nearly 600 pupils) so is very exciting. The social worker told me that when she was talking to the girls, they were saying they had hope for their futures now – so thank you! You have made a massive difference to the lives of these young people.



**Success! Jemma's fundraising produced enough to buy two new knitting machines for the CHH co-operative. Children from the Deaf School were among the first customers to benefit from the new machines. See them below, wearing their bright sweaters with great pride**



**Feel inspired by Jemma to DONATE to FCYF? Go to our new fundraising page : <http://www.firstgiving.com/fundraiser/FairChildrenYouthFoundation/> **FAIRCHILDRENYOUTHFOUNDATION****

Dr. Jemma Hogwood joined FCYF as a volunteer in October 2010 soon after she qualified as a clinical psychologist. The varied experience she gained in different FCYF projects gave her many insights into the individual and societal challenges Rwandans face. Jemma left FCYF in August and soon after gained a full time role as a professional psychologist with SURF and Foundation Rwanda in Kigali. FCYF wishes her very well in her new position. 3



**RACHAEL & AFID**

**Rachael Shopland** from London, UK

**Profession:** Accountant

**Placement:** August - November 2011

**Role:** Help FCYF introduce new and improved financial management systems

**Placement Partner:** Accounting for International Development (AfID)

**Partner Mission:** Offering accountants the opportunity to use their skills to make a genuine difference as volunteers while gaining invaluable hands-on experience in the international sector

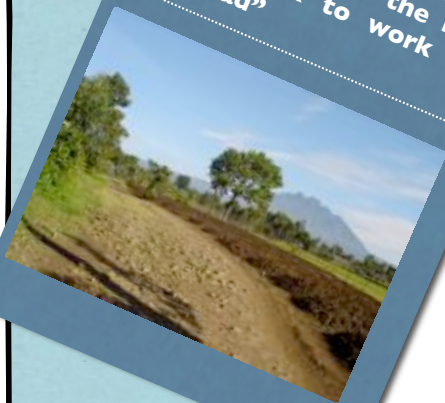
# BLOGSPOT 2: Rachael



## WISDOM / SONRISE : PRIMARY SCHOOL DEBATE

**“Ancient Life is better than Modern Life”** - the motion for the first debating competition between Wisdom Primary and its friendly rival Sunrise Primary! I was very excited to secure a place on the Wisdom supporters’ bench for this important inaugural event, held at Sunrise. And very professional it was too! The teams comprised 8 boys & girls from each school, aged between 9 and 11 years old. Both were dressed incredibly smartly (Wisdom children in their Sabbath uniforms of blue and white striped dresses / shirts) and were well versed in the rules and practices of professional debating including starting address for each speaker (“Madame Chairperson, Secretary, Judges, Proposers, Opposers and the House at Large”) and how to challenge the other team by making either a point of order; point of enquiry or point of information. The quality of the debate itself frankly blew me away. Each child was able to stand up in front of what must have been 200-300 other children/teachers in the audience and raise many good quality points addressing health, community, technology, family and ethical issues. I would have been surprised to see such a debate from secondary school children, never mind primary. As the children got more confident, they started to challenge each other’s points and members of the “house” were also able to challenge, sometimes quite harshly, but always politely. Amazing to watch! Wisdom were the winners!! And I know I might seem biased but they did make better quality points

Like Many Volunteers Rachael walked to work each day of her placement. She says “I had the most scenic walk to work I’ve ever had”



Wisdom Nursery School pupils are absolutely adorable. On nursery school days I try to get there for 7.30am to watch them sing songs and play games before classes. On Friday, they did a little baby “rap” song: different children would come up individually and sing a few lines to a song, while the teacher played a drum to accompany them. So cute! There was the scariest moment also where Kat, Becky and I got asked to teach them all (over 100 children) a new song – thankfully, a friend had suggested Wheels on the Bus, which went down very well as the little ones liked the actions and all know what a bus is

## WISDOM NURSERY SCHOOL



**Early readers of FCYF newsletters may remember a little girl who often seemed to be center stage in Deaf Children Center photos.**

From the moment she joined the school, little Ally was always ready to leap into action, first showing a fellow student how to use a garden hoe, then coaching the Center's Director, Louis, on his soccer skills.

FCYF staff soon recognized Ally's potential and have done all they can to teach and nurture her natural talents. Yet even the most optimistic of them would not have predicted that, within four years of joining the school, Ally and fellow student Kensole would spend their two month Christmas vacation on a program for trainee chefs in one of Rwanda's premier lodges catering to foreign tourists.

For that to happen, things also had to change significantly in the wider community. And attitudes toward the deaf **are** changing slowly, thanks to efforts by FCYF staff to raise community

**Ally in 2009 - already a rising star**



*Ally coaching another student in gardening class in how to get to grips with a hoe!*

\* A young Ally showing herself ever eager to help others do things - even Director Louis!



awareness, and to partners like Sabyinyo Lodge offering training opportunities for deaf youth.

Visible support from the nation's leaders helps too. See the Prime Minister below as he singles FCYF deaf students out for attention at a public gathering in Musanze.

Mixing with international visitors also prepares children for new challenges. UK volunteers Rachael and Becky accompanied the two young FCYF trainees to Sabyinyo Lodge to help them settle in. Ally and Kensole are true pioneers and FCYF looks forward to hearing about their experiences when they return.

**Ally in 2011** (in yellow) and Kensole (left) with

Sabyinyo Lodge's Head Chef and another team member



**The Rwandan Prime Minister publicly greets FCYF Deaf Center students during his recent World Food Day visit to Musanze**

# Concordia College Continues FCYF Support in Minnesota



## An Unequal Bake Sale raises funds for FCYF orphan girls and gender equality awareness in Minnesota!

By Rachel Ward

Last year I visited Musanze, Rwanda, with a student group from **Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota**. We taught English to children at **Wisdom Primary and Nursery school and FCYF's Deaf Children Center**.

The Deaf School was my favorite. I had no previous experience working with deaf children. They absolutely astounded me. I learned the wonders of Helen Keller at a young age so knew the incredible capabilities of deaf individuals. Yet in Rwanda, deaf children are generally considered stupid and incompetent.

The children at this school had previously faced many difficulties. So, I did not know what to expect. There was no need to worry: they

were enthusiastic beyond belief. They gave us names in sign language and taught us clapping games. We gave lessons on "silent" Simon Says, bingo and volleyball. It was a challenge for me, a chatterbox by nature, to find new ways to communicate without my voice!

The other school at this same location is a **Child Heads of Household (CHH) program** where female orphans attend class to learn skills such as wood carving, sewing, tailoring, and basket weaving. They also learn about caring for seeds and goats. The young women then use these skills to support their families. The program is critically important in Rwanda where many children have lost both parents. I was so humbled by their determination to succeed.

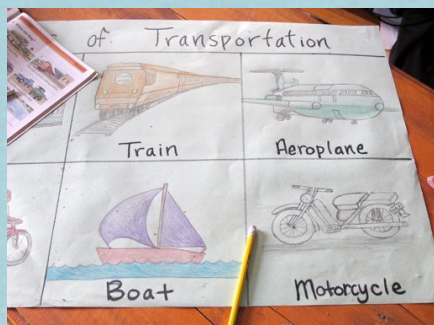
**Back home in my Global Sustainability Issues class** I was able to connect Minnesotan students with Rwandan students. Each group in the class was asked to create an event to **raise funds and awareness on campus of one Millennium Development Goal (MDG)**

Our group chose **MDG 3: Gender Equality**. Concordia's connection and the equal opportunity goal of FCYF made it a natural recipient of funds. A fellow student suggested an

**"Unequal Bake Sale"**, where men pay full price and women pay a percentage of the price. For our bake sale, women paid only 77% of the price because on average a woman in America earns \$0.77 to every \$1.00 a man earns. The baked goods were donated by friends, faculty, staff, ourselves and other students who had visited Rwanda.

**We held the Sale on March 8, International Women's Day** in the **Student Center of Concordia**. Each item had a sticker with two prices: green (\$1 men, \$0.77 women), pink (\$2 men, \$1.33 women), or yellow (\$3 men, \$2.54 women). Women were very interested and often donated the extra 33%. Many faculty members, male and female, visited the table during the day. Some male students were more resistant. Many men paid full price and thought it a clever idea, but some refused to buy anything for full price. A highlight was the conversation with two exchange students from Rwanda who knew the CHH school and were glad we were doing a fundraiser for them.

After a full day of awareness-raising, **we raised \$341.61 for the CHH girls** to buy materials and create more beautiful products to sell and ultimately provide security for their families.



## How does a new volunteer at FCYF come to terms with 'culture shock'? Becky Nice from England tells her story

So after my 28 hour journey to Rwanda I turned up at the airport very tired and unaware of what to expect. I was greeted at the airport by the director, Elie and his wife Bernadette, and then we drove to Musanze about 1 hour 30mins away from Kigali, where I met Jemma, another British volunteer staying with FCYF for the last 6 months.

My first day was dedicated to settling in and getting used to the area, Jemma walked me to Musanze town and showed me the main places I would need, like the bank, internet café, post office etc. We then went to a small little African café, (a small building with a counter and a few plastic chairs and tables) where I had my first milky African tea, like Chai tea but with different herbs. Different but nice.

The walk to town was very strange. Jemma and I were the only white people and we were constantly stared at. Jemma seemed at home and greeted every stare with a 'mwiriwe' (good afternoon) or 'mwaramutse' (good morning). In Rwanda it is polite to greet everyone. People are always stopping on the street to have a chat, very different to our 'stare at the floor' culture of England.

The charity I am working for is called Fair Children Youth Foundation (FCYF); it consists

of five main projects: Wisdom Primary School, Wisdom Nursery School, The Women's Co-operative, The Deaf School and the Child-Headed Households Project.

Wisdom Primary School is a delight, the children are so loving and polite, always cuddling and greeting you. As you walk in the classroom they have to stand up and say "welcome " and - after they learnt my name - "teacher Becky". It is a brilliant school and finished top in its region last year. The number of children enrolled doubled in 2011 to 600 students, aged 6 to 15. Of them 256 are orphans and don't pay fees, so most at the school are funded through the FCYF charity.

Children are only allowed to speak English at school. Because many Rwandan people still speak French or Kinyarwanda, Elie has to employ teachers from Uganda to teach most subjects. This does not help when trying to keep costs low. To find and employ teachers from other countries is expensive.

It is unbelievable how different everything is. Paper and pens are cherished: one pen is given to each child. They have to look after it because they probably cannot afford another one. They also have to bring a pack of plain paper at the start of each

school year. Sweaters have holes, most children don't own soap; lots of them probably only get one meal a day and that is at school. Each classroom has about 50 children and children in dorms are crammed in small rooms with bunk beds back to back.

On Wednesday I tried to do things on my own, so I was put into my first classroom with children doing exams, I didn't know the school rules, whether they were allowed to talk or leave the room, and then children were asking me if they could go on a "short call." I had no idea what it was, so had to go and ask one of the other teachers, who said it was "toilet"!

The thought of having to teach a class scared me. I felt like I was being no help at all and had no idea what to do. So I decided to go home for lunch, then try and research for funding instead. Something I thought I felt a bit more comfortable doing. I then started on my first journey into town on my own. That scared me a bit too. I don't know why because I have always thrived in those kinds of situations.

Today was the first day I really thought 'what am I doing here?' And 'what have I got myself into?' I think it's because I felt a bit useless with no real aims yet and the shock of adjusting. But I never give up, so I just had an

## Becky's Story Continues:

early night, and thought 'let's see what tomorrow brings'

Thursday and Friday have been wonderful, I feel like I found my place at the deaf school and with the child heads of orphaned households. I have found that by just not trying to think of things to help but by watching and interacting I have learnt so much.

For example, with the girls of CHH, trying to help them with tasks and sitting down making baskets, cross stitching, playing with them at lunch and trying to teach them English as they work, I have managed to gain some respect. I have had to properly laugh at myself, because every word I try to speak in Kinyarwanda they laugh at me, but they respect me for trying.

They call me 'Mumma Becky'. I feel like in a small time and even though the language barrier is massive, I have really connected with them. Other volunteers that worked with the CHH both talked about making baskets. I assumed that the group who learnt to make the baskets get more time spent with them, because basket making is a bit easier to pick up than the other crafts. With this in mind, I went straight to the cross-stitch girls and started talking to them instead. It took a while but eventually they started to try to teach me Kinyarwanda, starting with numbers.

My brain is finding it hard to adjust to new tongue rolls, so the CHH are constantly laughing at my lack of pronunciation and



## Becky soon makes new friends at Wisdom School

you must completely laugh at yourself and not get frustrated.

I then moved on to the sewing machine girls, who seemed to take me under their wing straight away. On Thursday, five of them made a huge effort to get me to remember their names, They tested me on the Friday to see if I was paying attention. When they found out I remembered (only because I thought it was going to be important and wrote it down in my note book, and revised before I met them) they then didn't leave me alone, always asking me to teach them, asking me to dance with them, and stay with them in break, repeating English that I had taught them.

I'm going to try and make some picture work sheets with English and Kinyarwanda words so we can maybe communicate more.

It is similar with the deaf children, In only two days I have learnt Rwanda sign language and can have conversations. I have learnt that I am visual, because this came as second nature to me and I learnt so much in one day. I am hoping to learn the alphabet over the weekend so I can go in on Monday and help with a lesson.

I knew that things would be a shock to begin with, but I am surprised in the change from Wednesday to Saturday.

On Wednesday I thought there was not much I could do, apart from trying to get funds. Now in just two days I already feel more connected to people and realize the importance not just of trying to help but of slowing down and letting other people help me.



## Intercordia Canada students find themselves 'at home'

What do you get when you take 3 Canadian students and place them with separate Rwandan families for three months? You get the Intercordia Canada program. Intercordia is a university-based program that gives students the chance to experience a developing country's culture for 3 months. What better way to really experience a culture than to live with a family? Milijana (21, Ontario) Naomi (23, New Brunswick) and myself Stephanie (20 Ontario) all chose to go to Musanze Rwanda, for three months to volunteer with FCYF and teach at Wisdom School

All coming into this adventure with zero expectations, us girls were faced with many challenges and surprises. From peeing in a hole, showering from a basin outside, washing our own clothes by hand to really having alone time, eating dinner 8-9pm and having your little brother pee on the floor, our experience has been anything but dull and boring.

All of us had families that matched our lifestyles very well (well as good as they can). Naomi was overwhelmed with love, company and visitors 24/7 as she had a minimum of 10 people living in her small house (aged 2-46). With a mosque down her street and the family cow outside her bedroom window, her life didn't know 'quiet' or 'relaxation'.

Milijana was living in a Rwandan mansion, at least by our definitions. Don't be alarmed though, to us a mansion means indoor plumbing, more than three bedrooms and different meals each day. Her two younger sisters kept her busy and her friendly house workers challenged her to learn Kinyarwanda more and more each day. I lived with an amazing family that allowed me to have my alone time but was more than ready to dance with me and take photos. My sister Kellia (aged 7) took quite a fancy to me and slept in my bed on more than one occasion.



Our experience was everything but normal and we wouldn't have wanted it any other way. We were seeing and experiencing Rwanda from the eyes and life of true Rwandan. We went through ups and downs, good times and tough times. However, we all learned that tears and fears are necessary for growth and growth is what happened with us all. We don't know when Rwanda will be in our lives again, if ever. However we do know that our families have been forever imprinted on our hearts and they will always welcome us back 'home'.

**Intercordia Canada volunteers spent three months in Musanze from May to August 2011. They were mentored by Dr. Jemma Hogwood from the UK, who extended her FCYF volunteer placement by four months to help FCYF pilot this new type of 'home stay' volunteering program. Thanks to the success of this pilot, Intercordia Canada plan to send students to Musanze again in 2012**

The first thing we noticed about Musanze was how friendly and welcoming everyone was from the moment we arrived.

We were running late due to a baggage delay and arrived into Musanze after 9.00pm. We were so pleased that some of the mentors had waited up to meet us. After a fantastic meal at Elie and Bernadette's, we went back to our hotel to start our **Think Money Team** adventure

We began our 5 days in Musanze with a trip to the Deaf School where we met the children and teachers. We were given a fantastic welcome by the students, who gave us a traditional dance as well as giving us all a name in sign language.

We ran a photographic workshop for the students, giving them all the opportunity to take their own pictures with digital cameras - which they really seemed to enjoy! We also held sessions for face painting and football, which everyone loved.

## TEAM RWANDA 2011



*Widows from the Kimonyi Cooperatives as supported by FCYF greet the Think Money Team members with traditional singing and dancing*



*For many boys and girls at both Wisdom Primary and the Deaf Center Schools, the highlight of the Think Money team visit was the World Cup Soccer Tournament*

We then met with the mentors of the child-headed households (the 'Nkundabana') who were kind enough to share their own experiences with us.

Another highlight of our trip was meeting with widows from the Kimonyi cooperatives. They greeted us with a sea of color,

dancing and smiling faces! We were all very moved by the gifts we received and really enjoyed dancing. It was great to see how much of an impact joining a cooperative was having on these women - helping them to develop the skills they need to become self-sufficient.

## THINK MONEY

VISIT ARRANGED THROUGH

## JUBILEE ACTION



Thanks to the tireless efforts of partners like Jubilee Action and Network for Africa, FCYF has enjoyed funding support and volunteer visits from Manchester-based Think Money since 2008.

Jubilee Action and Think Money funding provides vital support to the Child-Headed Household Vocational Training Program and the Deaf Children Center Nyange

# THINK MONEY VOLUNTEER VISIT contd



One thing that seems to unite children (and adults) all over the world is a love of sport. We arranged a "Rwandan Soccer World Cup" and had a fantastic time watching - and playing in - some great matches. Teams from the Deaf and Wisdom Schools participated, and Wisdom won a closely fought final 1 - 0.

That only tells half the story: the joy on the faces of all involved and the skills of some very talented footballers will live with us forever. The fact that the children happily accepted some dubious decisions (by an out-of-breath English referee) and guest appearances (by some out-of-shape English visitors) made this day even more memorable!

Every tournament has its high points. Goal of the tournament had to be the scorching volley by

an 11-year-old girl from the Deaf School during an exciting game with some of the older children. Player of the tournament? Teacher Louis. His determination to see his children succeed in life by giving them a fantastic education is matched only by his determination to win the Think Money "Rwandan World Cup"! Good luck next year, Louis!

As our trip came to a close we took some of the deaf children out for a day trip. Elie kindly organized the use of Wisdom School's minibus and we took the children to a lake where they enjoyed boat rides and took more photographs.

All in all we had a fantastic - and at times, humbling - experience, which will live with us always.

We hope that the next Think Money team have an experience that's as amazing and enriching as ours, and our thoughts and prayers will always be with the people of Rwanda

## THINK MONEY TEAM

2011 REPORT BY

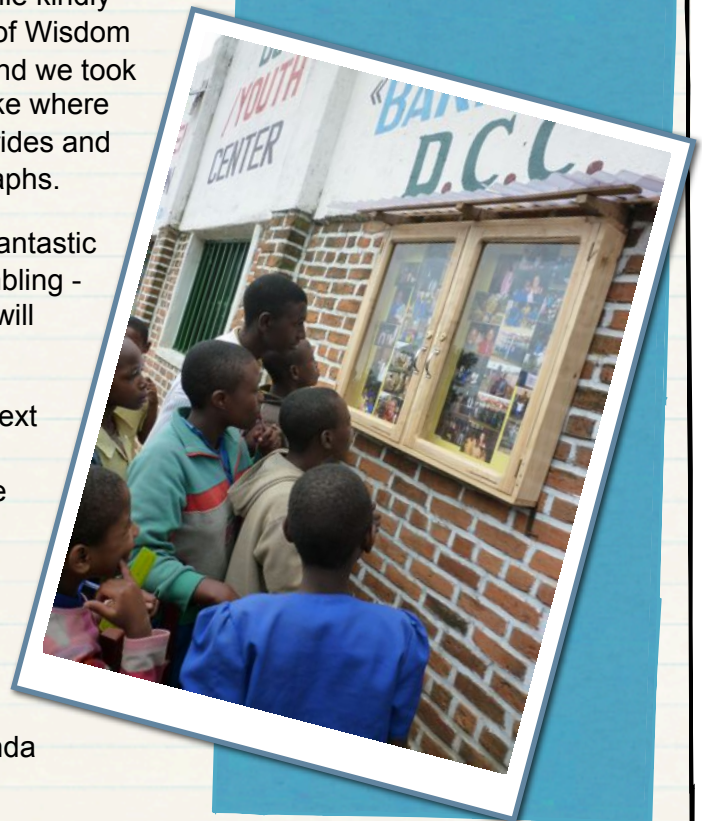
CHRIS JONES

NICOLA BACON

GARY SUTTON

CHERYL CROSTHWAITE

STEVEN MUIRHEAD



In October, **Anna-mai of Jubilee Action** was back again in Musanze. She accompanied **Jane**, an audiologist from the **Seashell Trust**, who came to serve the acute need for Rwandan children's individualized ear testing and hearing aids. News spread fast and during their stay, Jane tested many more children than planned.

Want to **Volunteer** at FCYF?

Check out:

[www.fairchildrenrwanda.org](http://www.fairchildrenrwanda.org)

Want to **DONATE** to FCYF? Go to:

<http://www.firstgiving.com/fundraiser/>

[FairChildrenYouthFoundation/FAIRCHILDRENYOUTHFOUNDATION](http://FairChildrenYouthFoundation/FAIRCHILDRENYOUTHFOUNDATION)