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# TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

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January 24, 2026

## **What did I learn from teaching the TTF Pre-Form 1 English class?**

I discovered teaching English in Manow for a little over two months is really more of a *learning* experience than a teaching one.

As the kids learned basic grammar, I learned how incredibly friendly and helpful strangers in a foreign land can be. I recognized that while I have traveled great distances, many of the kids have never been any farther from their homes than the distance they can walk. I learned all the rules of capitalization. And apostrophes.

I discovered that borrowing a book is such a gift to them. If only I could figure out a way to establish a library!



I learned I like warm showers more than cold ones. I learned there are many different places, cultures, and people in the world, and we can all learn from one another. While the reason for traveling so far was to teach the children, I recognize the fact that I learned a great deal as well. ~Jeff Sweeney



## **You Can Come Home Again**

Coming home from Tanzania has been much as I expected. I am very happy to be back with my family, friends, and pets, but part of me is still in Manow. I still feel the warmth of a community that welcomed me for a second time. Teaching in Manow was so much more than teaching lessons; it was about connecting with students and the community, which was reinforced by returning a second time.

Because this wasn't my first time teaching there, and I'm not sure when or if I will return, it made leaving even harder. Seeing familiar faces again, reconnecting with former students, and connecting with community members who greeted me like family turned the experience into a continuation rather than simply a beginning. Watching this year's students grow, gaining confidence and pushing themselves, was wonderful, and seeing how former students have blossomed was such a delight.

I miss the students most, but I miss the community too, the sense of belonging that I grew to feel, and the warm understanding that everyone looks out for one another. I don't want to leave Tanzania feeling like it's an ending, but more like a short break from a place

and people who have had such an influence on me. The distance between Olympia and Manow is real, and yet I feel a remarkable close bond to the people and community. I hope to carry that for a very long time. Maybe with another trip there in the future. ~ Lucy Winter



### ***Our Privilege. Our Blessings.***

I still can't quite believe we're home with frost on the ground. And a grocery with an array of foods; oh, dairy, how I missed thee! A car radio. No 142 bongs on the next-door church bell at 6:30 am; yep, we counted them one morning. Hot showers. Dark chocolate. A profound sense of our *privilege*. And *blessings*.

We came back home just before Christmas, a circuitous route through South Africa and Namibia, flying through Ethiopia, Rome (refueling), and Chicago before arriving in Portland, Oregon. In our 3 ½ months traveling in Africa, we took 19 airplane flights! Thank goodness for compression socks. All the other African countries we visited do tourism very well, a gift to us after bleaching our vegetables and monitoring the water tank in the tiny village of Manow.

I got emotional when the kids sang the Tanzanian National Anthem the second week of class, so of course, I was more than sad to say goodbye to our Manow friends, from the *boda boda* driver to the amazing students to the charming man who delivered our eggs. I really enjoyed being in the classroom, especially once I got past reflexive pronouns! And I believe the last few weeks of teaching sustainable farming, climate change, first aid, and sexuality really were a purposeful infusion of knowledge for these student leaders. They accepted the challenge readily, patiently spelling out “transpiration” and trying not to mix up male sex cells with male sex organs. We even practiced putting condoms on plantains (Jeff hilariously had to ask if we were to peel the plantains!?).

The students seemed to really appreciate our boldness in teaching them what love is and what love isn't. It was gratifying. The TTF curriculum is inspiring to all of us with its unique and rigorous approach.

We will have a continuing relationship with TTF. Jeff and I look forward to sharing our stories at the TTF fundraiser on Saturday, June 27, 2026. We are happy our scholarship student, Elice, is so excited about attending Manow Lutheran Junior Seminary. [She] started there a week or so ago and hopes to be a doctor; Tumsifu, who we adored, accepted another school's invitation. We communicate with several



Tanzanian friends on the WhatsApp; yep, they may not have electric ovens, but many have cell phones nowadays.

This whole teaching and living in Tanzania experience is obituary-worthy. Life-changing and paramount to our lives today, and always. We are very proud, if a little relieved, that we met the challenge of living in a developing country and came home healthy and happy, forever changed. And we have these deep relationships with people in Tanzania that touched us all. Thank you for making this transformation possible through your support and encouragement. ~Lori Sweeney

## **Message from the President**

Looking back on the past year, I'm encouraged by how much we have grown as an organization. Periods of transition should be about reflection, clarity, and a renewed sense of purpose. And that is exactly where we find ourselves.

The Board has been actively working to refine programming and scholarships, strengthen fundraising and financial practices, update policies, and strategize our outreach. This level of thoughtfulness gives me great confidence in the future of the Tanzania Teaching Foundation.

I invite you to join us for our annual Members Meeting on March 26, 2026, where we will share our annual report and updates on where TTF is headed next. We look forward to connecting and continuing this journey together.

Blessings,

Laurie Schaetzl-Hill

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As we close this chapter of our volunteer stories, we invite you to stay connected to the Tanzania Teaching Foundation and the work that continues year-round. Whether you're curious about volunteering in Tanzania, interested in sponsoring a scholarship, or considering a donation to support our programs, we would love to hear from you.

If this newsletter inspired you to explore teaching or supporting our work, please reach out to our Executive Director, Stacy Douglas, at [stacyd.ttf@gmail.com](mailto:stacyd.ttf@gmail.com). We look forward to continuing the conversation and welcoming you into the TTF community.

*Until next  
time...*

