

May 2021 Update

Dr. Stephen & Jodi Swanson

One year ago we were in the midst of wondering whether we should stay in Tanzania or leave in very questionable times. When we think back to "what we knew" then, in the midst of pandemic uncertainty and closing borders, we were living on the edge. Though there are still unknowns and risks, it seems our feet have landed on more certain ground. At the same time, we are aware of great losses for so many of our friends and supporters. Loss of loved ones is at the top of the list. For those of you who have lost close family members or friends, we hope you find comfort and peace.

Here in Tanzania, the top of our news headlines was the death of our President John Pombe Magafuli. The country held 21 days of mourning and a smooth transition to the incoming, former Vice President, President Samia Suluhu Hassan. She is the first female president of Tanzania, coming from Zanzibar. We are very hopeful that she will preside with wisdom and grace over this country. There is an air of hope that can be felt in Tanzania, and a deep joy over the peaceful transition that characterizes the people of this country.

In so many ways, hope has risen in our hearts even in the midst of that which remains unknown. As of yet, there is no Covid vaccine available in Tanzania, Covid statistics have not been released since May 2020, and the country still struggles to meet demands on it's healthcare system. But there is relief over having survived the last year, and a sense of changes coming. It could also be that hope is rising with the arrival of the long rains as everything has burst out in color! Whatever the reason may be, we hold on to hope.



Dr. Evelyne Mushi
Holding a former NICU graduate (L) and working with Dr. Swanson (R)

In 2019, we recruited Evelyne to work with us after her internship was completed.

Dr. Evelyne Mushi is among the top 1% of all doctors I have ever worked with in Tanzania. All who know her admire and respect her work ethic, intelligence, dedication, humility, and compassionate care for mothers and their children.

Her story is even more remarkable when one realizes that she became an orphan while still in primary school. Against a backdrop of personal suffering, childhood loss of both parents and 2 siblings, she is a testament to resilience and grace. Evelyne is committed to children, to serving in Tanzania, and to one day becoming a neonatologist -- perhaps the first Tanzanian neonatologist in northern Tanzania! I have been privileged to serve as her clinical mentor, supervisor, and friend. Later this year, we will be sending her off to a 4-year pediatric residency program in South Africa. I couldn't be prouder of her.





A NICU Year in Review:

325 babies (a record!)

93% survival (another record!)

144 premature babies (still another record!)

20 area hospitals and healthcare facilities sending us their sickest babies

Our smallest survivor ever, 612 grams (1.3 pounds) - Left Middle Photo

\$160,000 raised to support NICU babies through donors and churches

No baby ever turned away due to money issues

Using only appropriate technology for our setting

Training at every opportunity (bottom left)

Our Motto:

Every Breath Counts, No Matter How Small.



Kids' Corner

We have come to the end of Caedmon and Indya's Spring Break from their school in Kenya. We've had some small trips, just the 4 of us, but mostly we have been home and the kids have taken a good long rest. In the meantime, the Covid curve took a rise and Kenya issued a lockdown around Nairobi, closing all schools for 6 weeks which meant they began their next term here at home online. This week we received the good news that Kenyan schools are re-opening, and our children will be returning back to their school this coming weekend for their 3rd and final term of this school year.

Caedmon took his ACT a few weeks ago and so begins the journey of searching for a college. There are many factors to consider and the combination of a pandemic and living an ocean away from the US certainly poses some challenges to visiting college campuses. Meanwhile, he is enjoying his classes (in particular Computer Science and Chemistry), and has found time to camp in the forest or climb the trees (with his rock climbing equipment). Hammocking is so much more fun at 60 feet above the ground!

Indya has also settled in well. Besides her regular classes, she thoroughly enjoyed cooking class (eating her homework was the best!), and sewing has become a new passion. She is now making bucket hats for friends. Though art and pottery are in her future next year, she has a passion for the ocean and marine science. We will see where that takes her! She's been an avid reader this break though it is a rare day that she doesn't draw or paint something new.

Hannah is pressing through challenging exams and long research papers and is eagerly awaiting bluer skies and warmer temperatures in MN. St. Olaf College in MN continues to have strict Covid protocols in place, which has been a bit isolating though she has had a few opportunities to see extended family. She was able to receive her first Covid vaccine in April, and the second is soon to follow. She has found a number of international students to whom she has connected which has lifted her heart. She will finish her first year the end of May (and what a challenging one it was!)

We are always grateful for your interest and support. We have a few requests for you to keep in your prayers:

- Jodi's work permit and resident permit renewal to be granted (thank God that the nursing license has been granted and should be "in hand" next week!)
- Wisdom for Steve as he makes many decisions regarding the future direction of the NICU and local physician/nurse training.
- Ongoing financial needs and fundraising efforts for the needs of the Pediatric Department, NICU, hospital bed fees for malnourished children, and salary support for pediatric trainees. (To donate towards these programs, please [click here](#))
- Covid vaccine to become available to Tanzanians
- Health and well being for all our family and protection for the kids as they travel back to Kenya.
- Thank God with us for the glorious rain and the growing crops

With gratitude,
Jodi and Steve Swanson