

# SUNDAY SPOTLIGHT



## Sunday Brunch

Jean Gordon

### Luke Commission still doing good work in Africa

Two months ago, 1992 R-S Central graduate Dr. Harry "Tiger" Vander-Wal Jr., and his wife Echo, also a doctor, their 5-year-old triplets, Luke, Jacob and Zebadiah, and 2-year old, Zion, and her parents embarked on another medical mission trip to Swaziland, Africa.

The group spends about four months each year, going twice a year, in Africa conducting medical clinics. Their dream is to be able, financially, to be there fulltime.

A recent email tells us that they, The Luke Commission, are back home in Washington, D.C., after their most recent trip, where they conducted medical clinics.

Back at home, the couple will begin raising awareness about the great needs in Swaziland, seeking financial support there for further trips. They'll be back in Rutherfordton to visit his parents soon.

When we last spoke with them, the couple was in the process of collecting eyeglasses and were delighted at the overwhelming response from Lions clubs.

Comments from the Swazis after being fitted with glasses were posted on their web page.

"These glasses can see better than my eyes," said one young man.

"I can see the sky and the sun and the mountains for the first time in my life," said a senior citizen.

Echo said when one translator was addressing the crowd, educating them about their distance eyeglasses, he said, "Wear your new glasses. Do not put them in your pocket. Your pocket does not have the problem."

In their final travel journal of this two-month trip, the couple wrote:

"As I write, Echo sits seven feet from me talking to a 10-year-old girl and her grandmother who both just tested positive for HIV. Yes, they want to accept Jesus Christ right now."

"We have started offering HIV testing here and at the clinics. The government recently began to offer anti-retrovira drugs for those with HIV, but the drugs need to be taken monthly at special centers. Swazis are not known for long-term planning, because it is such a struggle to get through today."

Another, "We can grow gardens if we have seeds, teacher often told us last September and October." Now they have seeds.

The hospital roommate of a man who had cut his hand with a machete in the sugar fields made this comment, "You are blessed by God." Echo and Tiger reported the man came to their medical clinic a month after the injury. His hand was infected and was three times its normal size. After treatment and recovery, he was able to return to his work.

Echo said she and her four sons have visited the hospital maternity and pediatrics wards 24 times and gave gifts to more than 2,500 mothers during their two month ministry. "People thank us with smiles and handshakes and an occasional, 'God Bless you' in English. Truly He does."

Harry said one of their translators told the couple that his mother keeps supper for him until he arrives back home from helping at the medical clinics. "One evening we unexpectedly saw that supper — three small turnips."

Another said, "I will not forget what The Luke Commission has done for me, as he tearfully buried his face in his baby son's new clothes."

After the interview in March when I met Echo and Harry, I felt the same way about The Luke Commission. I don't think I'll forget them and their commitment to the Swazis and their desire to serve there.

Contact Gordon via e-mail at [jgordon@thedigitalcourier.com](mailto:jgordon@thedigitalcourier.com)