

A WORLD OF CHANGE

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Pauline (DeGrace) Taylor '68 says she started volunteering at an AIDS orphanage in South Africa because “I retired a little too young and was looking for something to do. I had been on holiday in South Africa and became aware of the plight of AIDS orphans.”

Pauline learned about Sparrow Village through a contact at Rotary. She applied to become a volunteer in 2004; her application was accepted and she made her first trip in January 2005. “I spent my life in financial services. I didn’t think I had any relevant skills,” Pauline says. She began helping children with homework and working to understand the educational system. Approximately 80% of the

children are HIV positive and many have been abused and neglected. Other times, she works with infants. “Early childhood development is a major factor in a child’s ability to learn, but sometimes what they really need is someone to love them,” she says.

Since Pauline’s first trip to Sparrow Village, she has returned eight times. She typically spends four to five months a year in South Africa, divided between two trips. Over the years, she’s taken on a variety of project including helping to develop a collaboration with the University of Johannesburg so that graduate students in psychology and educational psychology can do their practicums at Sparrow Village. She’s also written copy for the organization’s web site, managed volunteers, and started a baseball team.



When Pauline began volunteering, Sparrow Village housed 90 children; today, it is home to more than 300. Founded in 1992 as a hospice, it has evolved into a children’s home. Pauline says that most of the children with AIDS live now that they receive anti-retroviral drugs and can look forward to fairly normal lives.

“I’ve become attached to these kids,” Pauline says. Though she has formed bonds with many of them, she’s particularly fond of a deaf boy who arrived at Sparrow Village the week of her first visit.

Mandla’s mother had died and his father was too sick to care for him. “He cried the whole week and I cried with him. He’s had two serious bouts with TB—we thought we lost him,” says Pauline. Now he is a fairly healthy 12-year old.

One of the greatest challenges Sparrow Village faces is a lack of money to provide the children with the resources many of them need to get a better education. “We don’t have the money for speech therapists, occupational therapists, or counselors,” Pauline says. “I want to see these children grow up and become productive citizens of South Africa, but without an education, it will be very difficult for them.”

She says that while AIDS has become less of a problem in the United States, the number of people infected in Africa keeps growing. “They’re losing a good part of one generation and have another coming up with no parents. I think we have a responsibility to help. At Rivier, we learned that service is what we’re supposed to do—it’s been a joy for me.” ■

* **JENNIFER LISKOW** is Rivier’s Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications and teaches in the College’s Professional Communications program. Jennifer earned her bachelor’s in English and communications from Notre Dame College in Manchester, N.H. in 1996. In 2002, she completed her master’s in writing and literature at Rivier. She began writing in junior high school; since then, she has had poems, short stories, features and essays published. She serves on the Board of Directors for NH Roller Derby, the state’s first competitive flat-track roller derby league.