

## Experiences from Hanbury Home for Children

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For the past few years, my heart has been itching to make a difference. I have lived in the USA for 24 years and felt it was time to make that important move. This urge has spurred me into moving back to my homeland, Jamaica and ultimately, volunteering some of my time at the Hanbury Home for Children in Kendal, Manchester. I started on May 30<sup>th</sup> and will be volunteering for two months.

For the past couple of weeks, I have been working with the younger children - kindergarteners and 1<sup>st</sup> graders, while they are in class. I am also teaching computer classes - Microsoft Word, to the older children. These interactions have been challenging, yet several moments have simply touched my heart.

One such moment happened when the kindergarten teacher, Ms. Brown, and I were dealing with some misbehaviour and a tantrum from a little boy. We soon resolved that we required a little more help, and that I needed to take him to see Major Laing (the equivalent of going to the Principal's office). Of course, this was a slow, arduous walk with a very reluctant little boy, who tried to use various methods to convince me that he really did not need to go. But alas I prevailed, so off to the Major we went.

I must say it was a very different little boy who stood before Major Laing, as he was firmly but lovingly chided on his behaviour. He clearly did not remember all his offences but I was there to aid his memory (smile). After the talk, we quietly returned to the class. My next project was to then help the children make Father's Day cards. The plan was to have the children present these cards to the men at the home, later on during the week. All of a sudden, the same little boy got up and declared that he needed to give the card that he made to the Major NOW! We blinked and he was out the door, like a shot, with the card! We couldn't follow him because **all** the children now wanted to present their Father's Day cards to the Major. A class wide meltdown ensued, when both Ms. Brown and I tried to prevent the resulting stampede to the door!

Dear readers, do you ever recall a moment when you were caught in a feeling of utter disbelief and helpless exasperation, thinking, *what in the world just happened?!* Yep, that was me—caught in this very real suspended moment! Let me surmise, we had a child running fast up the hill to the office and a class 'going-to-pieces' (i.e. lots of crying) because they were prevented from giving their cards to the Major. **UN...BE...LIEV...ABLE!**

After class, I was able to pause and reflect on this amazing moment. It melted my heart (when it settled down to an even pace, of course). All the children wanted to do, was to give the cards they made, to the Major! These kids are so

special and so loveable! Oh yeah... it is definitely challenging work, but they are oh, so, very LOVEABLE!