

Mr. Bas Vanderzalm
REAL. LIFE. writing contest
Medical Teams International
PO Box 10
Portland,OR 97207-0010

Dear Mr. Bas Vanderzalm,

I now have the insight of the conditions many people endure day-to-day around the globe. More than ever, this exhibit has blatantly stressed upon me the need for action to improve these people's conditions. The REAL. LIFE. exhibit has a great impact on people. It pops the blinding and shielding bubble we have built around our communities, and then allows us to sense what the people's lives are like in each exhibit. As I have realized, this exhibit can evoke very strong emotions on often untouched topics. This is what makes the REAL. LIFE. experience different. What gives this exhibit its power is the hands-on feel of each room. In one room, you can lift a heavy water container and step inside a small hut, while in another you can feel the dirt and grime of a garbage dump beneath your feet. This is what makes this exhibit different and ends our naïve judgments of the rest of the world.

There are many places I would desperately like to send money to. However, one stands out to me more than the others. The HIV/AIDS affected people of Africa need help. With infected people unwittingly spreading the deadly disease across the continent, HIV and AIDS are destroying the families and communities in Africa bit-by-bit. As daily struggles deteriorate living conditions, it prevents the inhabitants of the region from preventing and treating infection. There are only three major obstacles in the way of stopping the lethal advance of HIV. First, there is a lack of basic materials that are essential for sustaining ourselves. Water, food, clothing, housing, and more are all in short supply. Second, there is a need for more treatment for infected patients. People often have to stand in line for hours just to access basic medical care. Third, both children and adults are not receiving enough education to control HIV and AIDS. Many parents only discover that they have HIV or AIDS when they have already had children, or when they begin to experience symptoms of the disease years after they were infected. This horrific spread of HIV and AIDS is the enough reason why this region desperately requires our full attention, not to mention the common shortages of basic needs and medical care.

\$100,000 is a large sum of money to handle. It also comes with its setbacks. If \$100,000 could fix all the problems in a zone targeted by Medical Teams International, most of the world's problems could soon be solved. \$100,000 can make a difference, but it is certainly not enough to meet all the needs of Africa's unfortunate people. With this in mind, I suggest to focus on two specific needs; basic needs and prevention education. In response to these needs, I would give

\$50,000 to each. Well-equipped and well-trained volunteers of Medical Teams International would provide help. Prioritizing those volunteers already in specific African locations, we could also send over the supplies and extra volunteers to help support the rest of the participating members. Supplies would largely come from our nearby community, with the rest being bought with a portion of the money. Supplies would mostly include basic needs, such as food, water, clothing, etc. Help would be distributed through community talks. Making access free to everyone, people would each receive a small kit of supplies, perhaps some water, food, and a blanket. The crowd could then listen to an educational talk about the prevention of HIV and AIDS, and how to treat them. The supplies would encourage people to participate, and they would then be able to better stop the spread of HIV and AIDS once having attended the educational session. In this way, I hope we can help the multitudes and masses affected by HIV and AIDS in both basic necessities and prevention education. This money will go to a valiant cause, and, as Andrew Carnegie once remarked, "The average person puts only 25% of his energy and ability into his work. The world takes off its hat to those who put in more than 50% of their capacity, and stands on its head for those few and far between souls who devote 100%."

Sincerely,

Paul C. Diebold

Waluga Junior High School, 8th grade, Lake Oswego, Oregon