Just another day in the life of a health volunteer. I went to a Lori’s site last week to assist her with a small HIV workshop she set up at the technical institute next to her compound. It went off really well, with over a third of the school in attendance! We had videos (in Kiswahili) about HIV and its pathology, slide shows and posters on STI’s and we were able to give out free condoms and family planning (birth control pills) to the students who were interested. We were also able to test almost thirty people, which was awesome! I was really glad to help out at the day and it made me realize a lot of the innate or easily accessible knowledge we as Americans have. I had brought over a huge amount of birth control pills that I had received from the district for my HIV day to give out to the college students. These students who were my age, or more often older than me, had no knowledge of what birth control was or how to use it. I gladly taught them individually or in small groups so that I was sure they had received the message, but it made me think about how common this knowledge is in America, and how easily you can access the information you need if you wanted it. Knowing to take one each day at the same time was a concept I had to repeat several times to the same group, and for most people at home this is something they hear about all the time. Here, the students have never had this type of information taught to them, or had media to get the information, such as television ads, or easy access to Internet. This was the case for the other topics as well that were taught that day, but because I was specially dealing with family planning, it became more apparent. This was something I’ve known since being here, but once you are really sitting down and teaching it, and knowing the information you are providing is really valuable, that’s when it starts to sink in. I guess it’s just something I wanted to put out there, be grateful for the knowledge and opportunities we are given, whether you utilize them all or not, the access to such information is not available everywhere.

And it is not just the information revolving around family planning and HIV, but so many other topics can fall under this unfortunate umbrella, in many areas besides Kenya. Being the teacher, and not the coordinator of the event really put me at the level to appreciate what was being done, and seeing the students understand what I was telling them was really a rewarding experience. I’m excited to help out again with Lori at this school because she has planned a school-wide event there in May that will hopefully capture all the students.

As for me for now I am still working with my health clubs, doing lessons most recently on STI’s and this week on drug abuse. I am also still working on my event for World Malaria Day.

I still miss you all and hope everyone is well! I am currently reading Zeitoun by Dave Eggers and have not really delved into any particular show right now!

With love and African sunshine, Lindsey Rae

Posted by Lindsey Jackson