



Africa mission trip combines faith, medical skills

By MELISSA NANN BURKE

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Lisa Yingling felt a part of her was missing. She wasn't sure what.

She believed in God. She went to a Catholic college. But her faith life ended there.

When she went to Mass, "I felt like an outsider. I didn't feel like I belonged," said Yingling, 23, who grew up in Dover Township.

A priest who taught her in school, DeSales University in Center Valley, Lehigh County, saw something in Yingling -- a leadership quality that earned her a spot in a selective mentorship program for DeSales students.

In it, she thrived, advisers said.

She studied the philosophy of St. Francis de Sales, who wrote that religious belief was something that pertained to everyone -- not just priests, monks and nuns but people with worldly jobs who could also incorporate their devotion into their work.

"It was getting to know ourselves better," she said of the two-year program. "A lot on how we could personally better ourselves while bettering our community. A part of me was missing when I started the program, and I felt whole as a person ending the program. I kind of opened myself up."

Yingling's transformation came from a new appreciation for the role faith can play in your life, no matter what work you do, said the Rev. Thomas Dailey, director of the Salesian Center for Faith and Culture.

"This is a medical student, who appreciates wanting to help people. But now she appreciates why and how science isn't just about fixing the person but valuing the whole person," Dailey said.

Yingling expects to graduate in August from the physicians assistant program.

She felt excited and encouraged by God to get out in the world and use her skills to help someone in need. When she got the chance to join a medical mission trip to Africa, she jumped aboard.

"My whole life I was always giving back, throughout high school and college with volunteering and everything. But I was finally getting that message that that was God's path for me," Yingling said.

She leaves June 5 for a two-week trip to Kitwe, Zambia, (north of the capital, Lusaka) with a 30-person team affiliated with Global Health Outreach, a missions arm of the Christian Medical and Dental Associations. The team includes physicians, nurses, dentists, physical therapists, nurses and pharmacists, among others.

Their work will involve treating residents in a crowded shanty compound that has no potable water, poor sanitation and little adequate health care, according to the organization.

Yingling said she's reading up on Kitwe's most common medical diagnoses, which include malaria, diarrheal diseases, acute respiratory infections, parasites, skin infections, tuberculosis, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS and other STDs.

She is still raising the nearly \$4,000 she needs for travel and expenses. She received two \$1,000 gifts -- one from DeSales and one from a Bethlehem-area church, she said.

Her mom, Angela Gerrick of Dover Township, admits she's nervous about her daughter's trip. But Gerrick understands it's something she's wanted to do for years.

"I think it's going to be an eye-opener. It's going to be such a different culture and environment," said Gerrick, an anesthesia technician at York Hospital.

"I work with several different doctors who go on these mission trips, and they say it's just amazing what you see. Your heart just goes out to these people. Once you start going, you can't stop. So I guess it's something I'll have to get used to with her."

MEET LISA

Name: Lisa M. Yingling

Age: 23

Hometown: Dover Township

Lives in: Bethlehem



Education: Dover Area High School (2003); DeSales University Physician Assistant Program (graduation expected in August)

Activities: PA student, volunteering

Hobbies/interests: Travel, music, baking, scrapbooking and desserts

FRANCIS DE SALES

Lived: 1567-1622

Became: Bishop of Geneva, Switzerland, and a Roman Catholic saint

Famous work: "Introduction to the Devout Life"

Known for: His work as a missionary, diplomat and his writings, creating a spirituality for those in every walk of life, especially the laity

Namesake: DeSales University in Center Valley (formerly Allentown College of St. Francis de Sales) is named for Francis de Sales. It's a Catholic, liberal arts college administered by the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales.

ON THE WEB

Salesian Leadership Institute, www4.desales.edu/SCFC/Leadership/SLI-front.htm

CONTACT US

The York Daily Record/Sunday News will gather information about summer mission trips planned by local groups and houses of worship.

To be included, send the following: name of group, dates of trip, the destination and project, how many people are going, contact name and number.

Send to Melissa Nann Burke at mburke@ydr.com or by fax to 771-2009. Deadline for submissions is June 6.