



African Leadership Partners

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Here's to a wonderful Thanksgiving! The following was written by Laura Mitchell, our fabulous pre-school teacher for the past two years. She leaves us next month. Please pray for her and her replacement.

Spring is paradoxical. It comes gradually, but suddenly it is upon you. In Swaziland, spring means the coming of rain. As you look onto mountainsides, the hue of green slowly overtakes the dry brown of winter. Suddenly, you realize the fields are a lush emerald. The landmark Jacaranda tree at the big dirt road that signals the turn off onto our smaller dirt road is now full of purple blossoms. Despite my almost daily trips to that spot, I can't tell you when it happened.

Right now, Nosipho is much like springtime. But she arrived in her dull, brittle, dead of winter. This toddler came from the homestead of an older "gogo" [grandmother]. Though not related, she had been rescued "informally" from her abusive mother. Found being fed beer outside a shebeen (unregulated drinking den), the "good samaritan" just took.

Though only in her mid-fifties, the woman suffered a serious stroke a few months later. Now her ability to care for Nosipho and several other vulnerable children was stretched beyond its limits. What stunned Mary Jean Kopp, the director of New Life Children's Homes was that Nosipho didn't shed a tear or look back once as they picked her up to go to her new home here at the farm.

Nosipho, her swollen belly and stick arms and legs, her big wary eyes arrived into Mrs. Sukati's home at the beginning of September. With her words she communicated when she needed to use the toilet and when she wanted to eat. Her whole being communicated fear, distrust and brokenness. She asked for plates full of food. As she woke up to find Mrs. Sukati there every morning she seemed to bind herself to her, never leaving her side. Slowly she began to make small journeys outside of the safety of direct contact with her mother to observe her new brothers and sisters. Soon the house itself was considered safe space to her. Imperceptibly trust started overtaking fear; Nosipho was awakening to life.

Suddenly, Nosipho's springtime is upon us in full force. Like the cacophony of birds at sunrise Nosipho's shrieks, laughs, questions and commentary fill the air.

"I'm fine. I'm fine! Mother I'm hungry. Mother I want to go to the toilet. I'm finished eating. Hello Busisiwe [her baby sister]. I love Mother. I love Busisiwe. I'm fine!!"

Nosipho's face radiates with the sunshine of joy and good health. Her arms and legs have filled out and soft curly hair is growing on her head. Both Nosipho and the baby calf, born about the same time she arrived, run for the sheer joy of it. Are they testing out the power in their legs? Are they feeling the blessing of energy and strength?

The rest of us are busy marveling and keeping up with Nosipho's new life. Yesterday evening Make Sukati and I sat watching the evening routine unfold – baths, dinner, play. Nosipho, like a bee going back and forth to the hive delivering nectar, was reporting to us all the latest news. On one trip she announced, "Make, ngimuhle!" [Mother, I'm beautiful!]

The exuberance of spring and of Nosipho couldn't be more true. Nor more beautiful!

Giving thanks,
Peter & Mary Jean Kopp

