

Well Drilling in Africa



Mike Tripp came to the Treynor Optimist Club on December 22 to talk about his well drilling mission trip to South Africa. He went with five others to Missions Ablaze in Tongatt, South Africa. The site had been part of a plantation for 125 years.

The mission sits on 18 acres, with most of it rented out for growing sugar cane. They prepare soup and stew in huge kettles. They do 60 gallons three days a week and 90 gallons two days, serving it with bread.

Missions Ablaze helps feed the poor. They served about 2 million meals last year. They collect food from stores that is about to expire and distribute it. The mission is on the East Coast of Africa.

The mission spends \$800-900 per month on water from the city. They pay on a per-liter basis.

Mike and the others went to school for a week to learn how to drill with simple Lone Star drilling rigs. When they got to the mission they found two non-working rigs and had to cobble one working rig from the two. It took a lot of duct tape and wire.

They arrived on Thursday after a 35 hour trip and worked Friday and Saturday that week, working every day except Sundays. Their day would start at 5:30 a.m., with devotion at 6:00, then breakfast, then start drilling about 7:15 and end at dusk.

Typically they were able to drill about 2 feet per hour, taking soil samples as they went. One day they hit shale and drilled about 3 feet the entire day. They were drilling a 3" hole, with plans to ream it out to 4" for the well casing.

One day they lost a few drill bits in the hole. Unable to get them back out, they moved four feet and started over. That day they drilled 85 feet.

The team managed to get to 105 feet and then ran out of time on their trip. Drillers from the area told them there was water at about 125 feet. Some people from the area continued drilling after they left, but hit solid rock, so Mike didn't know if they were able to complete the well. Hiring a local well driller would cost more than the mission could afford.

Mike said that schools are not good in South Africa. Some children graduate still unable to read and write. Schools were much better under apartheid. There is a lot of corruption and a lot of theft. In that area you need to be Zulu to get a job, because unemployment was around 75%.

Mike said "It's an experience to go to an area where day-to-day live is very difficult." He would gladly go back again. There is so much need. He was able to go with the mission to deliver food. "It is a pleasure to see people with so little, be so thankful."

Information about Missions Ablaze is available at:

<http://www.missionsablaze.org.za/>