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Williamson College Student Uses Skills to Aid African Orphan Ministry

FRANKLIN, Tenn. (April 2, 2012)—When Thompson Station resident Bill Sullivan, 42, transitioned from a career in management to become a student at [Williamson College](#), he had no idea that the move would take him to the other side of the world before he even graduated.

After years of working in management for a mid-sized garage door company, Sullivan began looking for an opportunity to move into ministry after becoming a Christian in 2002. He and his wife, Christy, wanted to take steps toward serving in missions work full time, but his lack of a college degree proved to be an impediment.

In October 2008, he enrolled at Williamson College in Franklin to pursue a bachelor's degree. Not having been in a classroom for 20 years, life as a college student was a little intimidating when he started, especially given the amount of writing that was required. Don Caldwell, one of the college's professors, worked on his own time outside of class to help Sullivan bring his writing skills up to speed.

"I enrolled as a means to an end, but I didn't realize how much I would love the experience," Sullivan said. "It really opened a whole new perspective to a biblical worldview that is reflected in every course."

He initially did custodial work for a local church while pursuing studies one night a week in four-hour blocks. "Williamson College really fits with a heavy work schedule," noted Sullivan, who now is majoring in Nonprofit Managerial Leadership.

"Bill has been one of our top performing students," said Ed Smith, president of Williamson College. "He is dedicated to pursuing excellence in everything he does, and he truly has a heart and passion for making the world a better place."

After a conversation with a WC staff member about what he'd like to do after graduating, Sullivan got a call the next day from one of the trustees who was involved with a Brentwood-

based ministry called [African Leadership](#). It turned out that African Leadership was looking for help with its new Adziwa Initiative Child Sponsorship Program for the [Adziwa Orphan Ministry](#) in Kauma and Lizulu, Malawi, Sullivan jumped at the chance and began work there as sponsorship coordinator in April 2011.

The initiative's mission is to demonstrate the love of Christ by equipping children at risk in Africa to reach their God-given potential by breaking through the barriers of poverty. The ministry seeks to accomplish this through the establishment of partnerships between local churches and organizations in the North American and African continents in a collaborative effort to discover and implement creative and sustainable solutions that meet the needs of children at risk in Africa.

Adziwa is translated "He knows" in Chichewa, which is the national language of Malawi—one of the poorest countries in the world.

To create a consistent flow of funds to partner programs in Africa, Sullivan helped develop a child sponsorship program that is versatile enough to appeal to a wide range of market segments in the North American church communities.

"Most of the orphans and other vulnerable children live with extended family members. We help supplement the incomes of caregivers so they can provide these children with meals, health care and other essentials," Sullivan explained.

Although he had been to Europe, South America and the Middle East during his service in the military, and then to China on a mission trip in 2004, Sullivan had never set foot in Africa until last January, when he got to see the Adziwa Orphan Ministry in action.

"To meet the people I'd been working with by phone and e-mail was very rewarding; I got a real feel for how successful the teams are in providing care for orphans," he said.

In Lizulu, a teacher and missionary named Everton Kumangire leads the orphan project in his spare time. In addition to the main orphan care center, there are four satellite centers serving a total of 500 children. Each receives a daily meal and there is a Bible study for kids, as well as individual and group counseling and tutoring services.

Sullivan recalled meeting a 16-year-old girl who had two younger sisters. They had been living with their grandmother, but two weeks prior to his visit the grandmother died. Now this 16 year old is raising them herself, but with the help of Adziwa she is able to continue with her education and keep her sisters fed and clothed, and give them proper medical care.

The Adziwa orphans, who range in age from infants to early twenties, are provided assistance all the way through secondary education. Through translators, Sullivan was able to talk with a number of them and hear their dreams and aspirations.

“Many want to be teachers, doctors or lawyers,” he said. “You can see the hope that dwells in them.”

Sullivan plans to graduate from Williamson in 2013. He’s excited about using what he has learned in his major of Nonprofit Managerial Leadership to impact the lives of African children for many years to come.

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