

Discovering Deaf Worlds Begins Journey

Rick Postl

SIGNews staff writer

On October 25, Christy Smith and David Justice kicked off their yearlong Discovering Deaf Worlds (DDW) globe-trotting trip to New Zealand. Said Smith and Justice, “The premise of DDW is to give deaf people worldwide opportunities to share and appreciate the languages, life experiences--communication access, education and employment for example-- and cultural stories in respective countries.”

In a year’s span, the duo hopes to visit deaf communities in eight countries to “share and appreciate stories of empowerment, inspiration and connection between international Deaf communities.” Another goal of the trip to promote global deaf awareness is to draw exposure to the diversity of sign languages from around the world and connect international deaf communities to one another.

Have you ever wondered what deaf people are doing at the moment in Kenya or Nepal? Wonder no longer! Mes-

sage boards and video clips on their website will document the experiences of deaf communities in the eight countries. One can also sign up for a free monthly DDW e-newsletter through the DDW website homepage.

Destination #1: New Zealand

Between October 25 and December 3, website visitors learn about the deaf communities in the South and North islands of New Zealand.

The noticeable all time high enthusiasm among the New Zealand deaf community is evident due to the official recognition of New Zealand Sign Language in April 2006. The Van Asch Deaf Education Centre has its roots in exclusively oral communication instructional methods; however, has evolved over the past couple of decades to blended, bilingual instructional delivery systems that includes both oral communication and signed communication methods.

While the first leg of the trip in a somewhat accomplished New Zealand country



David Justice and Christy Smith will post their travel and experiences of their journey in New Zealand from October 25 to Dec 3.

of some 223,500 deaf countrymen and women and roughly 7,700 New Zealand Sign Language users has been pleasant, Smith and Justice are prepared to observe and document pitiful life conditions and blatant disregard of the richness of deafness in society.

“The trip thus far,” said

Smith, “has informed us that deaf people enjoy the same riches and sorrows experienced by the American Deaf Community. We all want the same things in life and are in the pursuit of the same outcomes. Some communities are far ahead of the pack, other communities are making

favorable strides while other communities are choking in the dust of the gallopers far ahead of the pack.”

After a week in Christchurch, the Canterbury Deaf Club, Deaf Association of New Zealand, and Van Asch Education Centre prepared a traditional BBQ and delighted in the animated expressions of two perplexed foreign tongues gulping down Marmite and Vegamite (both a sticky, dark brown food paste or New Zealand’s version of America’s popular peanut butter and jelly sandwich made of yeast, sugar and salt and, according to both Smith and Justice, tastes like a soy sauce sandwich).

Creating Possibilities: Leaving Footprints

Travels beyond New Zealand to Australia, Japan, China, Thailand, India, Nepal, Kenya and many more places until presumably October 2008 will inform and generate support among website visitors to enrich the lives of the deaf communities in these countries.

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As paraphrased from the DDW website, "Justice and Smith recognize that they come from a country abundant in resources." Their work also aims to develop a committed sponsorship capacity, for sponsorships of deaf individuals, cause, school or organization, particularly in underdeveloped countries, lacking appropriate resources to accomplish their goals." Sponsorship requests made on their website and will likely include

requests for reading materials, writing materials, personal hygiene items, deaf ambassador expertise, assistive technology and money.

DVD Collection Will Be Made

Documentaries will be created about deaf communities visited and will involve videographies of various sign language, folklores, leadership experiences and traditional stories shared by signing storytellers. In the end, a DVD collection of stories will



Christy Smith converses with a native New Zealander, using New Zealand Sign Language. Smith hopes to release a DVD collection of her travels with Justice.

be made available in support of the DDW "vision of drawing more exposure to different sign languages and common deaf experiences from around the world."

Some \$29,800 has been raised thus far in support of the trip price tag of \$60,000. Sponsorship and donation information may be found on the website and checks may be payable to either David Justice or Christy Smith and sent to: Discovering Deaf Worlds, 2220 Ridgeway Avenue, Rochester, NY 14626.