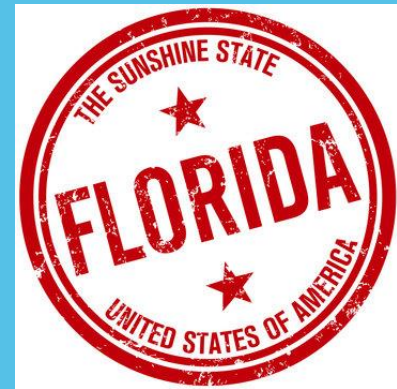


Postcard



From: **Dr Jean T. Penny, RN,
PhD, ARNP, Pennywise
Healthcare Consulting, St.
Augustine, Florida, USA**

Volunteered in:
**Melkhoutfontein, Stilbaai,
6674, South Africa**

When: **2017**



This was my third trip volunteering with Dreamcatcher in various communities in South Africa and also enjoyed travelling seeing the country. Originally I had planned to split my time in Africa between Kenya & South Africa as I have done in the past. Unfortunately, due to political unrest related to the re-election of Kenya's President, travel in Kenya was considered unsafe. Because I had already scheduled meetings of special interest to me, I decided to meet with a couple of project managers & then move on to South Africa well ahead of the re-election. Anthea Rossouw, Dreamcatcher founder, was kind enough to add an extra week to my South African itinerary. Thus I arrived for the next stage of my journey.

Feelings of displacement dissipated the minute I moved into my Melkhoutfontein, Wasteland – Graced Land base camp location, “Maine's Homestay.” Charmaine, my Kamamma hostess, is a breast cancer survivor who is partially disabled & thus can no longer work as a house cleaner in the resort town of Stilbaai 7 kilometers away. Becoming an independent business entrepreneur was an answer to a prayer for her. Maine's Homestay is comfortable, welcoming, & surprisingly roomy. My room was separated from the family living quarters by the kitchen. I had a comfortable small bedroom & a private bathroom with all the amenities to myself.

Kamamma Charmaine is an outstanding cook, specializing in fresh fish (a particular favourite of mine) & lovely vegetables. Each night she whipped up a batch of wonderful multigrain muffins for the morning. We planned menus together daily & generally ate together in the comfy & recently updated kitchen while the rest of the family took meals in front of the TV. I preferred the spontaneous chats we had to watching television. Charmaine is a strong, interesting, & personable woman; an excellent conversationalist, & a charming hostess. Her home served as my base camp/luggage storage location from which I took several short trips (Stilbaai, Cape Town, Dreamcatcher home office, etc). She & the whole family took me into Stilbaai a couple of times in their car to the local wi-fi cafe & for shopping. It was a most convenient & rewarding arrangement & I thoroughly enjoyed being welcomed into the household & getting to know my host family & the surrounding community. People in the neighbourhood went out of their way to be helpful & I felt safe & secure at all times.

Daily “work” for me involved visiting various area schools teaching about cancer prevention, girl child education, & infection control. One day I joined a house painting brigade & we painted three small homes as a part of the Dreamcatcher PaintUp with Kamamma community beautification through ‘cultural awakening’ project. Other times I gardened at the botanical garden, formerly a waste dump site at the Dreamcatcher Home Office. I planted indigenous & drought resistant plants around a lovely acacia bench, made by the local crafters, designed as a memorial to celebrate the life of my recently deceased husband. It was a great comfort to me. All the beautiful plants in the botanical gardens (both decorative & food crop) are organically managed with household generated composting, including use of recycled “grey” water. Each day a delicious organic salad was harvested to serve with lunch.

One memorable outing deserves special mention. The Dreamcatcher organization was invited by the Department of Education to travel to Cape Town to present a unique two part practical example of (a) how employees can be transformed into entrepreneurs—from servants to service providers; & (b) how to prepare & serve a catered lunch of traditional South African food to 60+ educators from Netherlands & South Africa, demonstrating their cooking skills. It was a rousing success.

This effort involved a two day, 10 person, two car delegation driving six hours to reach Cape Town. The Kamammas then worked late into the night doing food prep, slept a few hours, started cooking in earnest at 5 AM, & pulled the entire buffet together with apparent ease. It is clear the Dreamcatchers can provide food which treat your tastebuds like angels proudly representing the amazing array of South African food, at any event.

After serving the huge repast to a delighted & receptive auditorium full of educators, each Kamamma & Bhuti delivered an absolutely riveting account of who they used to be & who they are now: Proud tourism enterprises. They got more than one standing ovation and the Dreamcatcher model for sustainable enterprises has been acclaimed as a model by the South African and Dutch educators. The Kamammas and Boetis laughed afterwards until they cried. Together they cleared the hall & washed the dishes, then our convoy traveled eight hours back to Melkhoutfontein, arriving at nearly midnight (it was slower driving back across the mountain range after dark). Everyone was tired, but jubilant. The Kamammas & Bhutis carried on like this was just another outing.

Judging from the extremely positive responses & comments from the audience, I have every confidence it won't be the last. The sound, grounded training and mentoring programme Dreamcatcher offers, is delivering returns on every count: these are savvy, professional, welcoming and proud South African tourism enterprises.

My stay in South Africa as a Dreamcatcher volunteer at Wasteland – Graced Land, Melkhoutfontein, was enjoyable & productive. I feel comfortable & safe there & love working with a variety of different audiences for my health education materials. As in previous years, I relished being a member of the Dreamcatcher family & look forward to continued involvement in years to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean