

July 30, 2017

Dear JJCF Board Members,

Thank you for your support in my journey and in allowing me to travel to Swaziland. As I reflect on my experiences during the internship, I can see that I have improved myself and my skills through various challenges. The people I met and their stories have made me determined to do something significant in the world. I have also learned much about problems in developing countries and why they are difficult to eradicate.

More importantly, what I have seen and heard will impact the decisions I make every day and for the future. I know that I will never be content working in a hospital in the United States for the entirety of my life. Not after seeing malnourished, HIV-positive babies with twig-like limbs and severe anemia. Not after talking to people my age who just happen to be born in poverty—thus living in mud-and-stick huts and eating only maize porridge not even once every day. Not after realizing that the people I am working with side-by-side have watched family members take their last breath because of a preventable disease. Not after interacting with a man who used to tie a rope around his abdomen and would tighten it to relieve hunger pains. Not after hearing the almost unattainable dream of a seventeen-year-old girl who wishes to become a nurse.

I am forever grateful and honored to have had the support of the Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation. I am acutely aware of the privilege I had to be able to intern at Project Canaan and experience Swazi culture. This experience has impassioned me to start or work in a nonprofit that helps deliver health care as well as economic development. I am also considering the idea of establishing a nursing school in a developing country. Through these dreams, I wish to inspire others to take risks and do much more than the status quo.

None of this would have been possible without JJCF and your support.

Thank you,

Ruth Lee
Heart for Africa