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HE'S PUTTING UP A FIGHT TO LIVE

Caring for Kaden

BY SARAH SPANGLER

“Good Luck,” was the name given to him at the Lutheran Orphanage. My roommate, Julie, and I stood over his makeshift crib. With absolutely no fat or muscle on his body, he just wanted to be held and never let go. Today, I look down at my fingers and marvel at the memory of his wrists being the same size.



Sarah Spangler, holding Kaden in her arms.

Understaffed, with only two caregivers to watch thirty-five energetic children, this little boy would never receive the attention needed to recover. His big, sad eyes stared into mine with a serious gaze as he struggled for each breath. It was a terrible feeling to leave him lying there, but there were still several hurdles to overcome before we could take him back to the Cradle of Love Baby Home, where he could receive the individual care he so desperately needed.

A few days later, after a pre-scheduled trip, I returned to find an exhausted but enthusiastic roommate. And in Julie's arms, newly christened Kaden, which means “fighter” in Celtic. “He’s putting up a fight to live,” Julie said with a smile.

Although he was extremely malnourished, through the painstaking process of squeezing milk into his mouth he would finish off about two ounces of liquid in an hour. We kept him in our apartment to assure he received constant care.

In the middle of the night I would often awaken to silence, wondering where the sound of his labored breathing had gone. More than once, I stood over his cradle to make sure his lungs were still going in and out.

A hospital test confirmed Kaden was HIV-positive, and a life-saving saline solution was deposited through an IV to re-hydrate his system and allow him to have a chance at life. What a difference that made! He began to drink more than ever, and after two weeks he had gained almost a pound, raising his weight to an even seven pounds. Though it was impossible to know his real age, his alert eyes and attitude placed him around five or six months old.

The time to return home came too quickly, and I had to say goodbye to everyone who had touched my life so deeply. As I held Kaden in my arms, I wondered who he might become someday and wished I could see



Kaden gripped Sarah Spangler's finger.

him celebrate his first birthday ... and beyond. What a journey his life had been, from abandonment at the police station to living like a prince, lavished with love and attention.

Over two months passed before I saw his face again. Davona Church, from the Cradle of Love Baby Home, wrote to inform me he had fought hard against an illness, but just couldn't beat it in the end. Kaden passed away in her arms as she sang, “Jesus Loves the Little Children.”

Everything in me wanted to hold him in my arms once more.

Kaden was just one of so many children still struggling to survive in Tanzania. If you would like to learn more about Davona's ministry, please visit <http://www.cradleoflove.com>.



Kaden's final rest.

Sarah Spangler, a 2002 Andrews University graduate, spent last summer working for the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Tanzania, Africa. While there, she also assisted Davona Church in the development of the Cradle of Love Baby Home.