2004

A Commitment to Service

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A commitment to service

The memory haunts Ashlee Weimar ‘04. A teenager with a swollen face entered the hospital in Swaziland, Africa, and told of a year of continuous nosebleeds.

“This girl has advanced leukemia and I know she will die because there is no chemotherapy in Swaziland,” Weimar thought as she listened.

Two weeks later Weimar stood helplessly by as the girl suffered her last nosebleed. Weimar knew then that she did not want to watch 16-year-olds die due to lack of treatment in Africa.

Weimar returned to Africa with the January Term class Emergence of Modern Ghana. Although the class did not focus on the health care system, Weimar had the opportunity to meet with a doctor who operated a free clinic supported entirely by donations and volunteer work.

“It was pretty amazing to see the communities pull together,” said Weimar.

Most of Africa has an overwhelming need for orthopedics, surgery and general practice,” Weimar noted. She hopes to attend a medical school that offers programs in international health, HIV studies and rural health.

Weimar’s internship in Swaziland — arranged through Linfield’s cooperation with Oregon State University — was a world away from her home in Arlington, a small town on the Columbia River. As she administered vaccinations to animals on the family farm, she developed an interest in science.

Today, Weimar, with her biochemistry degree in hand, looks back on those chores as the catalyst that sparked her goal to be a doctor in Africa.

Weimar was based at the Good Shepherd Hospital in the Lubombo Region of Swaziland. Originally a mission hospital, it had six doctors and 10 medical departments.

“A commitment to service,” said Weimar, “is not something that we can understand or grasp. It is something we might have to accept.”