

A new OUTLOOK

UIS undergrad gives the greatest gift — her time

By **AMANDA ROBERT**

In a give-and-take world, Shana Stine knows only how to give.

The University of Illinois-Springfield junior has volunteered more than 300 hours of her time to local organizations like Big Brothers, Big Sisters and spent last year's winter break building a new home for a deserving family in Mexico — but, she says, it was her decision to spend a summer month working in a Kenyan orphanage that blessed her with a new perspective.

"Once you're in a Third World country and you jump rope and hang out with orphans who have nothing — no parents, no food that's their own — you can't come back to the United States and be the same," Stine says. "You can't."

Stine decided after returning to UIS this fall that she wanted to focus on helping the poor in Springfield. Because of her contagious enthusiasm for volunteerism and her role as the resident advisor and coordinator for a special dormitory wing made up of freshmen interested in community service, Stine soon inspired others to adopt her passion for assisting the city's downtrodden.

She had previously volunteered at the Springfield Overflow Shelter and decided

that it would be the perfect place to meet and help the homeless. Last month, when she brought a group of freshmen residents to the shelter for the first time, Stine says she was amazed by what she learned.

Francie Staggs, the SOS volunteer coordinator, watched as Stine walked around after dinner and interacted with the homeless.

"Some volunteers stay away," Staggs says, "but she walked right over and sat down at a table and talked to our residents. That's what we want people to do."

In just one night, Stine says, she met former business leaders, Sunday-school teachers, and UIS postgraduate students. She learned that many of the shelter's patrons are there because of pride — they've made bad decisions and are afraid to face them.

"You realize that those who are at the shelter and those who volunteer at the shelter are not really that far away from each other at all," Stine says. "I could easily make one or two mistakes and be staying there."

This was one of many lessons, Stine says, that she also wanted to teach her freshmen residents. Although many of them had done community service, she says that not many had ever worked with the homeless and at first they were nervous about visiting the shelter. Stine says that they asked her stereotypical questions: "Do the homeless smell bad?" "Are they mean?" "Are they all crazy?"

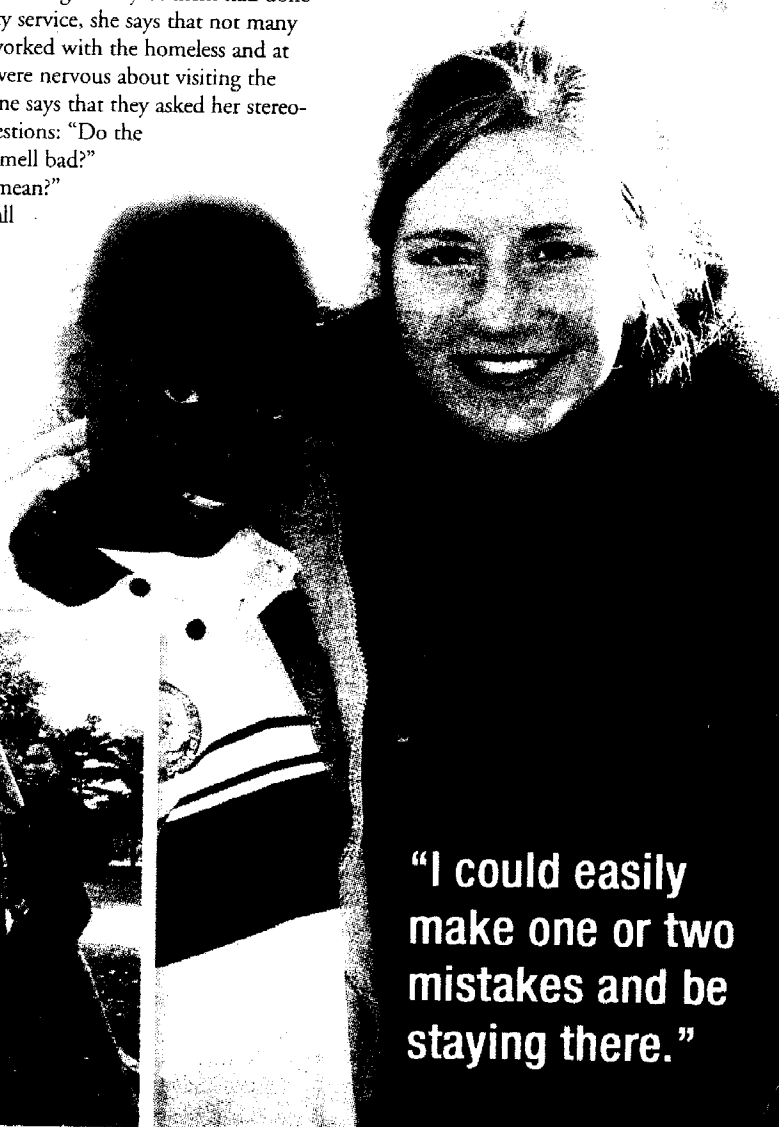
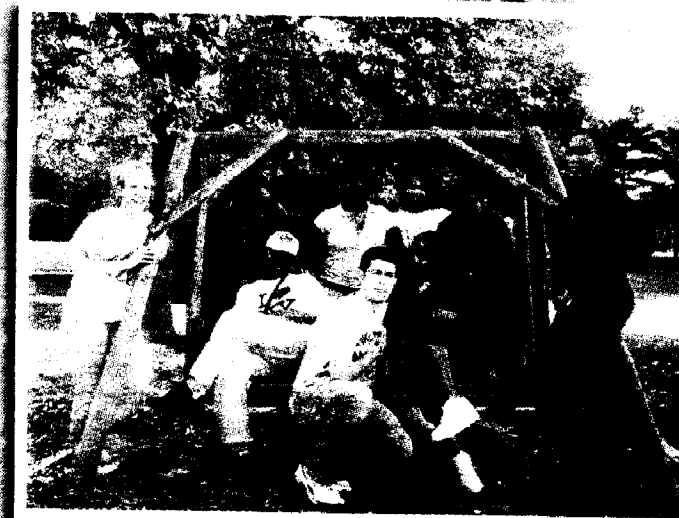
But after one shift of serving dinner and spending time with the shelter's patrons, Stine says, she noticed a change in the freshmen. They asked Stine to share the stories that she had heard and asked whether next time they could walk around and speak more with the people staying in the shelter.

"For them to be in an environment where they are serving and having a conversation with the homeless has really changed their outlook on things and really fought their tendencies to be apathetic," Stine says.

Stine's residents now visit the SOS to volunteer individually and are becoming known as regulars by those at the shelter. For many of them, it was a goal to get to know the homeless of Springfield, but Stine says they have achieved far more.

"You can always talk about people who are hurting, but when you know them, their faces, their stories, that's when things really change for you," Stine says. ■

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