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Rachel enjoying the company of young hospital patient Ouma who was in an accident leaving him with limited speech and unable to walk. Picture courtesy of Rachel Domingo.

## Smiles and therapy in Kenya

Rachel Domingo is a former special needs teacher at Martin Infant School in East Finchley. Here she looks forward to a very special trip to Kenya.

**I first visited Kisumu, Kenya, in the summer of 2004. I was involved in a project with students from Kings College, London, where we fundraised and helped build a school. I then organised two groups of Reading University students to raise funds for building a health centre in the local area in the summer of 2005.**

Once the groups left in August, I set about volunteering as a Speech and Language Therapist, having recently graduated. I worked for the Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya (APDK). They offer physiotherapy and occupational therapy as well as surgery to those unable to afford it themselves. They provide these services in local hospitals as well as running a mobile clinic visiting those in rural areas unable to afford the travel expense to town.

As one of only about five speech therapists in the whole of Kenya, I saw a wide range of in- and outpatients at the hospital. I also made home visits for the disabled or very poor.

I joined an Educational Assessment Team in a nearby school for children with physical disabilities. I faced some problems because of the lack of awareness of what speech therapy is and what speech difficulties are. Consequently, people with speech difficulties were seen to be stupid or were simply not understood.

Although there were differing views on disability many professionals I met were very aware of disability issues and challenged stereotypes. There was also a lack of resources (assessments, games, pictures etc) which made effective therapy difficult and many patients were unable to afford the transport every week.

In August I am going to Kisumu again for six weeks. I feel energised, and my experience will help me offer a better service to the local people. I am very lucky to be partly sponsored by the Dunedin Hospital in Reading, the town where I trained. I am also very lucky to have been accepted into the local community in Kisumu and to have met so many inspirational people.

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## How en-deering!

By Craig Johnson

**One of our most treasured areas of local woodland is home to a thriving population of stunning Muntjac deer.**

Originating in China, Muntjac were introduced to Woburn Park in Bedfordshire in the early 1900s. Escapees during the past century have successfully reproduced in the wild and created significant populations across many parts of the south of England, including Golders Hill Park.

Muntjac deer are 45-50cm tall and weigh only 12-15kg. They usually feed on bark

and vegetation in sheltered areas of dense woodlands. Their breeding is continuous throughout the year, with a gestation period of approximately seven months. The young fawn will usually be weaned by its mother for a further eight weeks before becoming fully independent.

The best time to see the deer at Golders Hill is shortly after sunset each evening.



New Born Muntjac Deers at Golders Hill Park this summer.

Picture by Craig Johnson

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