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SERVICE

Tanglewood resident works on hospital ship

By SARAH TUCKER stucker@hcnonline.com

In mid-July, 25-year-old Catherine Murphy will board Noire, Congo.

She's not going to sight-see

and exploring.

Murphy is a full-time volunteer with Mercy Ships, an ship she'll call home for aninternational charity that opa plane for the Canary Is- erates a floating hospital that lands. From there, she will provides medical services to travel by boat to Pointe people in third-world countries.

Now back home in Housor to do business, though she ton for the first time in 11

treat their illnesses, such as

One focus of the Africa

treat often with surgery is

congenital pediatric

cataracts, which occurs when

while pregnant, Murphy

stands out for Murphy be-

cause it was so moving it gave

her chills: A 4-year-old girl

was able to see for the first

something on the floor,"

Murphy said. "She kept try-

ing to grab her shadow be-

cause she had never seen it

"It just really put into per-

spective the things that we

know and take for granted."

"She kept trying to grab

time in her life.

before.

AFTER AFRICA

One cataract surgery

cancer, Murphy said.

will be doing plenty of work months, Murphy is already preparing to return to Africa and the Africa Mercy, the other six months.

DREAMING OF AFRICA

Murphy first fell in love with Africa after a family trip

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Catherine Murphy joins an all-volunteer crew from over 30 different countries on Mercy Ships' Africa Mercy.

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in 2007. An uncle who knew she wanted to go back to Africa told her to check out Mercy Ships after she graduated from college.

the University of Texas with a degree in journalism, Murphy went to work in public relations for a Houston law

the back of her mind, she more than 30 countries. said. "I kept thinking, 'maybe now is the time."

Finally, in 2012, Murphy decided to join Mercy Ships. She applied and was accepted first stepped aboard the Africa Mercy in the Canary Islands in August 2012.

LIFE ONBOARD

Murphy works as an in- SCREENING DAY house journalist for the *Africa* press releases and pieces highlighting the hospital ship's work and their patients in Conakry, Guinea.

A typical day for Murphy starts at 6:30 a.m. for breakfast and crew and communication team meetings.

Then she heads to the hospital to check on patients she's following and meet with translators, the "favorite part of my morning," she said.

She spends the rest of her day writing and working on different marketing materials for Mercy Ships.

Murphy describes the Africa Mercy as half ship, half hospital. Doctors and nurses wear scrubs, and the ship's

CATHERINE MURPHY

Follow Catherine Murphy's adventures aboard the África Mercy on her blog, clarkemurphy.wordpress.com.

captain makes daily announcements.

"When you're in the hospi-But after graduating from tal, it feels like you're in a hospital," Murphy said. "And it Mercy is treating physical dekind of feels like you're in the formities. A deformity they Navy when you're doing

Murphy works with a di-Mercy Ships was always in verse crew of all ages from a mother contracts rubella

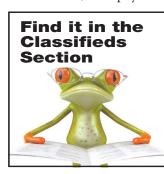
Some volunteer alone or with family, for as short as two weeks or as long as two years.

Murphy, who originally for a writer position, and she signed up for a six-month commitment, was so moved by her experience, she extended her commitment through December 2013.

Although she interacts with Mercy, producing radio spots, patients daily, some days and patients stand out to her.

> One day in particular is screening day, when the crew of the *Africa Mercy* screens almost 4,000 prospective patients to let them know if they're candidates for medical treatment.

> "Most have never been to a doctor before," Murphy said.



Patients are then given a FAST FACTS ABOUT card with the date and time of **MERCY SHIPS'** Africa their appointment. Some-Mercy times, people are turned away ■ First deployed in 2007 because the hospital doesn't have the medical resources to

■ Built in Elsinore, Denmark, in 1980

■ Can hold up to 474 crew members ■ Hospital has 78 patient beds

Performs approximately 7,000 surgical procedures onboard each year

what she'll do after December, but she intends to study for the GRE while on the ship to prepare for her future. Her work with Mercy Ships

has given her "new insight" into the world of non-profits and the needs of developing countries, Murphy said.

"It's a career move in a weird, unique way," Murphy

And though her upcoming trip to Pointe Noire isn't her first trip to Africa, she suspects it won't be her last either.

I think Mercy Ships will be something I volunteer with or donate to all life long," Murphy said. "If I'm able to go in the future, I would go back to Mercy Ships."



Photo by Ruben Plomp

Catherine Murphy is a full-time volunteer writer on the Africa Mercy. She has worked in Conakry, Guinea, for the past year and will head to Pointe Noire, Congo, in July.

Murphy doesn't know DISTINCTIVE RETIREMENT LIVING