Uganda

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Program: Mobile Clinics & Health Care in Uganda

Did the trip influence your knowledge of and perspective on the host country/city/community?

Going into Uganda I expected a more flatland/desert type of landscape and expected a lot of sickness everywhere we went. However, from the moment I stepped into Uganda and the moment I left, everything I saw, smelled, tasted, and experienced completely transformed my ideas about Uganda in a positive way. There aren’t just dirt roads and sick people but a country of people who are trying their hardest to make a living for themselves. The country is emerging and the community is full of life and dreams. I saw this in all the roadside markets full of people selling anything and everything they possibly can. The people I talked to showed me this even more. Their stories about the tough times they struggle with day to day were those you hear about in classes or in stories. But what was different, was the part of their stories that were all about working toward a future goal of stability. They all want to be something in life, they all want to support their families, they all want the most out of life, and are trying to make that happen as best they can. No matter what obstacles or problems I heard about or saw within the country, my perspective was completely altered by the hope and desire that encompasses the country.

Did you participate in some kind of volunteer work or service learning?

Yes, our program incorporated a service learning project. This project was creating a community garden within the village we were staying in. We, along with Uganda locals, tilled and cleared the land, planted different vegetables and fruit trees, and arranged the land to be used as a new garden for many years to come. I felt this was service learning because we participated in an organized activity that is being used to meet the community nutritional needs. Later on we reflected on this service activity in a separate discussion where we conversed about overarching topics of nutrition and agriculture in Uganda. The garden we started will be used to help feed the community, explain proper nutrition to the locals, as well as teach people how to properly garden necessary nutritional foods. This experience was probably one of the most rewarding and important things to me of this entire trip. I knew that what we were doing had the possibility to help many people in the future and it was something that we got to completely start and take responsibility for. It showed me that things like proper diets can have a huge impact in a place where disease and illness are so prevalent. This experience also taught me that a lot of the work people do in Uganda is intense labor and after a day of gardening I realized I never knew what that truly felt like.