



# Molweni! The first newsletter!

Greetings!

Happy Fall!! You are reading the first South Africa Service Learning newsletter publication. I know this has been a long time coming, but know it was worth the wait.

We all went on an amazing study abroad

and personal, eye opening experience. We can stay connected, continue to find our common humanity, and tell our stories.

If you feel inspired to write something go for it. If you just want

to read it, wonderful.

Have a terrific day and feel free to give me feedback!

Steph Guertin -Fall '08

## Returning to Cape Town

By: Renee Miller

One year ago, I was saying goodbye. I was standing outside the Kimberley House with tears in my eyes. It was time to leave the place that I had come to call home for the past five months ...

When I arrived in January, I had no clue of the ways in which I would change. I was a bright-eyed naïve Marquette student, yearning for travel, striving to serve, and excited about the

opportunities that lay ahead of me. But what I got when I arrived in Cape Town was so much more than I anticipated. As I'm sure you all can attest to, the South African Service Learning program is a life changing experience. But I'm not going to babble about what the program did to me as a person, but where it has brought

me... full circle. I have completed my application and been accepted to pursue a Master's of Science degree in biomedical engineering from the Cardiovascular Research Unit at the University of Cape Town (and specifically in the Groote Schuur Hospital). And one year ago today,



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- Sustainability
- Continuing Education in CT
- In the News

## Returning to Cape Town (continued)

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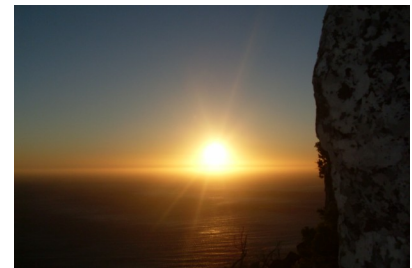
standing outside the Kimberley House, I never knew that I would be here, preparing for another adventure to our wonderful city of Cape Town.

After returning to the states last summer, the transition was difficult. On top of acclimating to life in a world somewhat less challenging than that I had become accustomed to, I started working at my co-op a short two weeks after arriving. I went from doing hands-on engineering work at Shonaquip, a company that makes custom wheelchairs for children in townships, to sitting in a cubicle, performing rote data analysis and testing for projects that seemed to have no impact. Needless to say, I was not happy. I was yearning for some-

thing exciting, something profound, something to shake me. And that's when the idea came. As I began to search for graduate programs, I happened to search the UCT website (as much of my daydreaming and procrastinating led me to any ... co.za websites). Reading further about the MSc program in biomedical engineering, I realized that this could be my perfect opportunity.

After many months of email conversations with both the department chair as well as my future thesis advisor, Dr. Thomas Franz, we have settled on a potential topic: computational biomechanics of myocardial infarctions. I am excited that, come February, I will have the

opportunity to perform meaningful research at an accredited university located in my favorite city in the world. A two year program, and without the safety net of Marquette, I am excited to be continuing my adventure as well as my global education in such a wonderful place as Cape Town. [For more details about the process of applying to UCT, feel free to contact me at [reneem5898@gmail.com](mailto:reneem5898@gmail.com). No GRE is required. However, funding for international students is limited. I am currently applying for fellowships to study internation-



## Sustainability as a Matter of the Heart

By: Mary Kate Wagner

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I traveled to Cape Town in the fall of 2007 and just like my fellow South Africa Service Learning participants I had no idea what lay ahead. While it was thousands of miles away, Cape Town sounded like a conurbation with strong influences from the western world. Upon arrival, I realized that I had oversimplified this mystifying place. Parts of the city could easily be mistaken for a first world metropolis. Within a short few miles, however, townships housing millions living in abject poverty serve as a harsh reminder of a not-so-distant apartheid.

As we began our class on Community Organizing and studied social analysis, a major theme presented itself over and over again: sustainability. We wrestled

with the notion of volunteerism and entering into a community that is not your own, hoping to create change. Sustainability does not grow unless it has deep roots in a community, people who are deeply invested in their society

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ety must nourish it. A thought occurred to me: I am just like any other volunteer who comes to Cape

Town, works for a few months, and then returns to my regularly scheduled programming of school and then a career.

This thought haunted me as I spent my last few weeks at Hillwood Primary School teaching in a kindergarten classroom and

coaching their sixth grade volleyball team. On my last day, we shared hugs, kisses, and tears and it hit me how much these young students impacted not only my worldview, but how I viewed myself. I became more than a volunteer, more than a service learner, more than an American grappling with sustainability in Sub-Saharan Africa. I simply became human. Not a human doing, but a human being with others. Sustainability includes creating a clean water source, better health facilities, improving educational systems, but with all that "doing" too often the "being" part gets lost. Both parts are equally important, but they have to work together. Sharing in humanity, our irrefutably most common trait, is perhaps the most sustainable act there is.

# Culture Shock

By: Katie Coldwell

From the moment the plan took off from the airport in Chicago, I braced myself. And I am not talking about bracing myself for the twenty one hours I would spend in an airplane, or living with the eight other Marquette students, or working in a township. I am talking about bracing myself for culture shock. It wasn't the culture shock going into South Africa that scared me; it was the culture shock I would experience when I came back to the United States, back to Milwaukee, back to Marquette University. And so, I braced myself from the moment I went in, 'til the moment I came out.

When I arrived back at Marquette to begin second semester I realized that one: culture shock was real, and two: culture shock was something I could not control. I missed the relationships I had made, I missed the taste of a good braai, and I missed seeing black people for crying out loud! I was sad and often lonely. But how I dealt with these reactions and these feelings was a choice- I could control how I responded to my culture shock.

After an abroad experience, the easiest thing to do is to "write off" those around you. It's easier to assume that "no one will understand," rather than make the effort to explain a situation to them. Or it's easier to store those photo albums under your bed and look at them when you need a good cry by yourself. It's not easy to try to build a bridge between life there and life here. In fact, it's damn frustrating. It takes patience. It takes courage. It takes deep breaths. But it is possible!

As a Resident Assistant in Schroeder Hall, I created a bulletin board

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about my semester in South Africa. It provided information about the program, along with pictures and stories from my own experience. Honestly, I am not even sure if anyone read it. But that didn't really even matter.

What mattered was that I tried to communicate a little bit of what those five months had been like. And in trying, I felt myself open to sharing more and more about my time abroad. The bulletin board was just one stepping stone on the bridge between life in Cape Town and life at Marquette.

While in Cape Town, I worked for the Desmond Tutu HIV Center, at a clinic in Masiphumelele. My main project was to help organize after-school programs for youth in the township. While working there, I witnessed HIV/AIDS first hand. Everything Jim Lees talked about in his AIDS & Development class was lived by my co-workers at the clinic. I was like a sponge, soaking up information about the disease from all directions. When I came back to Marquette, I felt this urge to shake people and ask "Did you know that nearly 1,000 people were dying every day from HIV in South Africa?" Whenever I heard someone complain, I wanted to chime in "At least you don't have HIV!!!" Patience and deep breaths were the im-

mediate solution to the apathy I saw in those around me, but helping plan the HIV/AIDS Retreat through Marquette's Center for Community Service was the long-term solution. I helped plan the Immersion Weekend the semester I returned from Cape Town and this last year. Educating others on the disease really helped bring together the two worlds for me. I am so grateful for the opportunity to aid in providing others with a deeper understanding of this illness that is affecting so many. Everyone deals with culture shock differently, and I am not saying that one person's way is any better than the next. What I am saying is that culture shock is normal. Culture shock is bearable, and you can get through it! For me, dealing with culture shock meant delving head first into Marquette life, while focusing on those issues that were passionate to me. Marquette needs passionate people, who are willing to talk about social concerns openly. For me, studying and working in South Africa provided the opportunity for me to serve not only in another country, but here in Milwaukee as well. Bracing myself for culture shock helped, but it was my decision to invest in my professors, residents, friends, and family that was truly my saving grace.



# The Courage to Try

By: Maura McGlynn

My experience in South Africa instilled in me the realization of the tremendous impact that the time, resources, and compassion of even one person can contribute to the world. Upon arriving back in the United States in December 2007, I met a Ugandan priest who was serving as a missionary priest to the U.S. in my home diocese.

Fr. Mujule is an educator who started children's schools in Uganda. He explained the tremendous barrier that malaria creates for the Ugandan people. Uganda has the highest incidence of malaria in the world. It significantly affects the Ugandan people's health, economy, societal structure, and education system. He described how malaria affects the children he meets in his schools each day. Malaria is the number one cause of sickness and death in Uganda, killing 70,000-110,000 children every year. Malaria has the greatest effect on the children and pregnant women. Each day, 350 children die of malaria. It is the highest cause of infant mortality and causes 60% of miscarriages in the country. The average Ugandan student misses 60 days of school a year due to malaria, and malaria related health issues. One Ugandan child dies of malaria every five minutes.

But there is a solution. When heavily used in one area, insecticide-treated mosquito nets can reduce malaria by 90%. With mosquito nets and education on how to properly use them, the incidence of malaria can be halted. Yet most families cannot afford to buy even one net. A solution exists to this monumental problem, yet a lack of resources prohibit the people from attaining it.

After learning about this, my sisters and I began a non-profit or-

ganization called NETwork Against Malaria. NETwork Against Malaria raises funds for malaria prevention/relief, particularly through the use of insecticide-treated bed nets. In addition, NETwork Against Malaria focuses on educating American and Ugandan students by providing instruction about malaria and its prevention. NETwork Against Malaria works with Fr. Mujule and Rural Outreach (an NGO founded by Fr. Mujule), to distribute bed nets and educate the people about the nets' importance. In fall 2008, NETwork Against Malaria delivered 350 bed nets to St. Margaret Mary's Secondary School and 50 families in Bwikara Uganda. This was enough nets to protect every student, teacher and administrator at this St. Margaret Mary's girls'

boarding school. The students were given instruction about malaria and the nets' importance.

*"Now I can say to parents who get the nets: You have the nets. You can now go to work and earn money. You will not need to spend money on malaria treatment for your children. You will not have to stay home away from work in order to take care of your sick children. You can save money use it for buying food and go to work to earn more money. Your children will not get sick due to malaria by mosquito bites. The money saved from not going to hospitals may now be used to pay school fees for the children and to improve on income generating home projects. You can work at home or away from home and thus get money to take your family out of the cycle of poverty. This has made a big difference in the village."*

Interacting with community organizers, political leaders, people at my service site, and friends equipped me with tools in how to learn the lessons of lives I have not lived.

- Michael Christopher Mugisa Mujule

NETwork Against Malaria continues to grow—involving people in the United States and Uganda. In the U.S., NETwork Against Malaria has eleven chapters. Local chapters facilitate creative and interactive opportunities for education and fundraising within their own community. NETwork Against Malaria partners with schools, churches, Girls Scout and Boys Scout organizations, youth groups, local charities, shops, and individuals interested in enabling people in Uganda. In Uganda, NETwork Against Malaria provides community education on health and wellness for the people of the Hoima region of Uganda. The Ugandan volunteers purchase, transport, and distribute malaria nets. They then educate recipients about malaria prevention and the proper use of malaria nets.

My experience in South Africa showed me that such an effort is possible. Interacting with community organizers, political leaders, people at my service site, and friends equipped me with tools in how to learn the lessons of lives I



have not lived. It showed me the great things we can do with our time, resources, and compassion. My conversations and observations showed me the tremendous impact we

can make with the time, money, and effort we take for granted each day. It can influence the lives of others in ways we do not even comprehend, and my time there inspired me to undertake an effort I may not have otherwise had the courage to try.

For more information on NETwork Against Malaria, please see: [NETworkAgainstMalaria.org](http://NETworkAgainstMalaria.org).

## We're All in This Together!

- **Do you have something interesting to say, but don't have the time to write an article? Do you want to just inform us about happenings with you, around you or the world!! Send those shout outs to [musafnews@gmail.com](mailto:musafnews@gmail.com)**
- Interested in blogging about South Africa? Coming soon an MU SASL newsletter blog type thing. Watch your emails!

### IN THE NEWS/ARTICLES ON SOUTH AFRICA:

- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8290234.stm>
- <http://www.washtimes.com/news/2009/aug/16/for-our-goodness-sake> (**GRETCHEN GEERTS**)
- [http://www.oregonlive.com/business/index.ssf/2009/07/hillsboro\\_builder\\_plans\\_40000.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/business/index.ssf/2009/07/hillsboro_builder_plans_40000.html) (**CAROLINE CORCOS**)
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- SEND UPDATED EMAILS IF YOU WANT THE NEWSLETTER TO [sguertin87@gmail.com](mailto:sguertin87@gmail.com)

## Inspiration from the Youth! By: Elizabeth Benninger

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This summer Liz Bailey, Kathleen Scott, and I returned to Cape Town to implement a youth project we had designed after our semester abroad in South Africa. The Youth Cultural Connection Project is committed to a peaceful coexistence of all humanity through educational and creative programming which enables the youth to actively participate in projects connecting them with the youth of other cultures and backgrounds. The project aims to connect children living in the diverse areas of the United States, in-

cluding youth from the inner-city and suburbs with each other and youth residing in the townships of South Africa. Through the sharing of stories, letters, poems, music, and photography the youth will have the opportunity to learn about the common interests and qualities which connect them as youth, new cultural traditions which make them unique, and most importantly the ways in which, no matter where you are from in the world, exists the shared life experience of being human.



The project also aims to connect youth from the diversity of communities and backgrounds of South Africa with one another. The project strives to create a platform where the youth from different racial groups, backgrounds, and cultures have the opportunity to learn about each other and share their different experiences in order to reduce the ignorance which produces hatred and misunderstandings amongst youth from different backgrounds. With the recent Apartheid policies, the residents in South Africa were forced to live in areas divided from one another based on their racial classification. Although apartheid has ended and South Africa now has a democratically elected government, the impoverished and divided living conditions caused from the apartheid policies remain greatly in place. Youth remain living in townships where they have little opportunities for an adequate standard of living, education, or chance to experience other youth and areas outside of their immediate communities. I am currently working daily with

youth from three different areas and backgrounds; Lavender Hill, a "Coloured" community, Masiphumulele, a "black" community, and Retreat, a community with a large percentage of refugee youth from countries such as Zimbabwe, Rwanda, and the DRC. We provide daily activities for the youth which helps them to find the value in their own lives and develop new skills and higher self-esteem. During the sessions the youth are working on their own portfolios about themselves which will be shared with the youth in the other Cape Town communities and the youth in the United States. We recently held a youth event in Fish Hoek, bringing the youth together from the diverse communities. The youth participated in all day activities where they discussed the strengths and challenges within their communities. The outcome was great and the youth created a list of the rights they feel all children have and designed projects to be implemented by the youth in their communities. If you would like any more info in the project or are interested in helping check out the website [www.yccp.weebly.com](http://www.yccp.weebly.com) or feel free to email me [atebenninger@hotmail.com](mailto:atebenninger@hotmail.com)