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learn...
explore!

16-year-old Alyssa Zlatkin helps children and gains experience while volunteering in Nepal

A current student at David Posnack Jewish Day School in Florida, 16-year-old Alyssa decided she wanted to become a physiotherapist after meeting disabled children in Ghana in 2012: "I came to Nepal to test myself, I know I want to help children in poor countries, and gain some experience."

Joining the High School Specials Care & Community program with Projects Abroad meant Alyssa was in a group with other 16-19 year-old volunteers: "There were 27 of us, and it was amazing! I wasn't the only American, but I also got to meet people from all over the world and learn about their cultures. We all meshed so well and made friends for life."

Whilst in Kathmandu, Alyssa helped paint a local school: "The classrooms were dirty and didn't have doors or



windows - it's very different to Posnack, but we all worked hard to brighten up their school, and seeing the children smiling at our work was so rewarding." She also visited a center for children with HIV: "In Nepal children who are HIV positive don't get access to education, and learning about that was really hard. You can't come to a developing country and change the way things are done, but the children were so smiley and deserve school just as much as I do."

At the end of the 2 weeks it was time to say goodbye: "Time had gone so quickly and saying goodbye was hard, especially since I was staying in Nepal; as I had signed up for both the Care & Community program as well as the Medical program. Projects-Abroad gave me all the freedom I could want. After 2 weeks in Kathmandu I was excited to be going to a new town to work with disabled children."

Alyssa spent the remainder of her stay in Bharatpur, an area of Nepal about 5 hours' drive from Kathmandu. It's a small town that is a hub for Projects Abroad medical volunteers, and Alyssa spent her time at a center for disabled



children: "As soon as I walked into the center I felt so welcome, the women who work there showed me how to help the kids, and they even let me go on home visits with them."

One of the children Alyssa helped, Sushan, has muscle clenching and spasms; "when I relaxed his hands he'd stop thrashing around; helping this one child for just a moment made me see what I want to study in college, and what I want to do for my life."

Even before her time in Nepal was over, Alyssa says she's learnt a lot: "I'm so happy I took the risk of coming to Nepal. It's so different to the USA, but we're not necessarily better - we do have more equipment in health clinics but we don't appreciate what we have. In the future I'm going to make a much bigger effort to remember how lucky I am."