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Franklin and Marshall College student takes his skills to Cape Town Sports Project

“I have only ever heard rave reviews about Cape Town and South Africa at large. I knew I would enjoy the natural and cultural diversity of the country, and that I wanted to immerse myself rather than simply observe it all.” Twenty-one-year-old Sam kind decided to follow the advice of his friends and volunteer in Cape Town for three months through Projects Abroad.

Choosing the type of volunteer work was as easy for Sam as choosing Cape Town as a destination. “I play college football back home and like to consider myself an athlete. I really love sport because I see it as a metaphor for life – a reminder to never give up,” he explained. “I thought it important to share this message with children from difficult backgrounds – to show them, through sport, that they are capable of so much if they set their eyes on a goal.”

Sam experienced many poignant moments with the children at the underprivileged primary school at which he volunteered. “Due to the lack of infrastructure and resources, the teachers have to be really strict with the kids in class as each is dealing with a class of up to 40 students,” he

explained. “In my sports classes I tried to encourage them to let loose a bit, both physically and mentally; as each class only has one hour of sports education a week, so I really tried to make it a memorable hour for them.”

Sam formed close bonds with many of the children at the school. “From a sports teacher’s point of view, I can tell you that although knowledge of the basic fundamentals of certain sports is lacking in the school, the raw athletic talent – the speed and agility of the kids – is incredible. I can tell you that the kids’ enthusiasm and warmth is totally refreshing,” he continued. “It wasn’t always smooth sailing – there were a few kids who seemed to use the field as a place to release years of pent up anger – but after spending extra time with them over the months we managed to find ways in which they could channel that energy in a more positive way,” he shared.

Sam was able to experience the South African culture first hand by living with a local host family. South African’s hospitality is something that Sam really enjoyed. “I was welcomed into the community almost immediately. Soon

everybody was greeting me on the street. My host family always had friends and extended family over to visit, so the house was never empty.”

Sam also enjoyed meeting other volunteers from around the world. “When we weren’t relaxing together at home or working at our projects, we would explore South Africa together. We went on a tour of the Garden Route one weekend and it was incredible because each of us was from a different country!”

Sam’s advice to future volunteers is simple but pertinent. “You will have many reservations before you arrive; what you need to remember is that volunteer work is conducive to meeting good, like-minded people. Once you’ve realised all of that, just remember to do three things: work hard, play hard and never do the same thing twice.”



SPORTS PROJECT IN CAPE TOWN

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