



Evan Trippel
Tanzania Alumnus 2009
Kenya Alumnus 2010

Ever since grade 10, I knew that I didn't want to go to university immediately after completing high school. I know that there are too many people that feel pressured to attend an institution and half the time don't get the experience they were hoping for. So I started saving every penny for something that I knew was going to challenge everything that I had ever experienced and learned before. What was I going to do? Volunteer in Africa for half a year.

I don't think that my family and friends actually believed I would follow through with my plans. Nevertheless, in January 2009, I was accepted to volunteer with YCI in Tanzania for October and November, followed by another two months in February and March 2010. Immediately, I began reading all that I could so that I was well-informed and prepared.

When I first landed in Tanzania, I was overwhelmed by new sights, smells and sounds. The first morning after my arrival, I took a walk around the local market. I was eager to experience everything at once, but afraid at the same time in case I did something to offend the local community. After two weeks, I felt much more comfortable with the culture, language and how to operate in this new community. After 4 months in East Africa, I felt very comfortable living in a different culture and created close bonds with the family who billeted me and my new friends.

During my time with YCI, we taught English and computer classes; organized gender equity, HIV/AIDS and substance abuse workshops; as well as held youth employment and leadership summits with roughly 400 people attending each. Through this experience, I've learned more about myself, how the world works, why there is poverty and the effects that it has on a society, the economy and politics of every nation worldwide. I also learned to appreciate the things that I have in my life, and just how privileged my life has been compared to the lives of people living in developing countries.

From all that I have experienced from volunteering, I realize that I want to work with child rights and am currently working towards that objective. Taking a year off to volunteer with YCI was the best decision I ever made for myself and I feel that I have become a better person because of what I have experienced.