

HAKUNA MATATA

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TAFE NSW student Nikki Shaw fulfils a 9-year-old dream of volunteering in Kenya.



Since she was a young girl, 22-year-old Nikki Shaw, from Umina Beach, had always dreamed of coming to Kenya to help children in need. Over the past few years Nikki has been sending \$80 a month to pay for the school fees and daily meals for two

Kenyan children. Now, nine years down the line, she finally decided to visit the country.

With Projects Abroad, Nikki has been involved in the Care Project at the Kardesh Ber Nea Orphanage, a home for abandoned, neglected and disabled children. “It has been a dream since I was 13 to come and volunteer in Africa, Projects Abroad gave me a chance to come and touch some young lives and give them one-on-one time and love.”

Nikki has been very helpful, always willing to give an extra helping hand to the Kardesh Ber Nea staff members. “Providing the children with stimulating activities and showing them love helps them to grow well and in a happy environment, you can see it in their faces that they are happy, and that gives me joy.” Nikki’s daily tasks included feeding, changing nappies, bathing, folding the babies’ clothes, preparing new activities, playing with the children and assisting the children with any activities in any way possible. This experience has taught Nikki a lot: “I have learnt to appreciate what I have in life and it has taught me to give more; it has really changed my perspective on life.”

Nikki admits to feeling the culture shock at the beginning, but as soon as she learnt how friendly Kenyans are she felt more comfortable walking down the streets. Her host mum Miriam has also been fantastic: “She was always there for me, I felt free to tell her my concerns, she always gave me good and helpful advice and she was up to date with Kenyan issues.”



Nikki has not only fallen in love with the children but also with the beautiful scenery around her. She has also found her weekend safaris to be memorable and she kept busy by finding a new place to visit every weekend, from Thomson Falls to the Menangai Crater. “Kenya is wonderfully blessed with beautiful nature and scenery”, says Nikki.

After her return back at home Nikki plans on seeing more of the world, giving more to those in need, and studying sociology, anthropology and cultural studies. To future volunteers, Nikki has these words to give: “It will be a different experience from what

you have at home, keep a journal and take some time to get used to the system; you will end up loving it.”

Stenhus Gymnasium graduate gains much more than midwifery experience while volunteering in Kenya



19-year-old Nanna Teglbjærg from Tølløse in Denmark decided to volunteer with Projects Abroad during her Gap Year. After working as a care-giver for the disabled after finishing high school and knowing that she wanted to study midwifery at university, she chose to enroll in the medical program where she would gain some experience and also do something worthwhile at the same time.

Placed at Nakuru Nursing Home's maternity department, Nanna had her hands full throughout her 4 month volunteering adventure in Kenya. The facility receives a lot of patients each day and given that the hospital staff cannot handle the huge number of patients the presence of volunteers is a huge help. "Patients can wait almost the whole day before being attended to, volunteers go a very long way in making sure these patients are served and directed to the right department."

Besides making beds, washing and weighing the newborns, giving prescribed medicine, writing reports and going around the wards in the effort of ensuring that the patients are okay, Nanna even had the opportunity to help women deliver their babies. "It was a bit difficult for the first few days but after attending several deliveries I got used to it, the mothers are also very strong given that they do not take painkillers and they get through the whole child delivery process with the absence of their partners."



Her work routine is the same as that of the nurses, a rare advantage that she has achieved by gaining their trust through hard work and paying attention. Working in another cultural setting has also been an advantage to her; “Unlike at home the facilities here are very different especially the infrastructure and the work routine. With the good facilities back home it will be a huge advantage since I now have experience working with the basic minimum.”

Staying with a host family has made a huge difference for Nanna, “You get aligned with the culture easily, my host mum played a huge role in making sure that my stay was smooth. In the beginning I had difficulties with everything but her magical touch calmed me down and I grew to love being here.”

Every day has been a memorable day for Nanna; “Kenyans are very open and welcoming people, my work colleagues have always given me the chance to try new things and I will always remember the first day I was allowed to conduct a delivery on my own.”

After she returns home Nanna plans to fulfill her dream of studying midwifery at university. Nanna’s advice to future volunteers is to “observe and ask questions, and your work colleagues will accept you as one of them.”

Family volunteering



Travelling with her 6-year-old daughter Olivia, Lotte, a day care manager back in Denmark, has been a great addition to Projects Abroad Kenya as well as its long term partner Hope Children's Ministry. Olivia's presence in the institution has been fascinating both to the young and the old; she has easily blended with all the children playing childhood games. Despite her language being Danish and not being able to speak English, this has not been a barrier for her to learn Swahili games and songs. This 6-year-old has also been a helping hand to her mum in the classroom where she has taught her fellow age mates Danish songs.



Like her daughter Lotte has also brought some change in Hope, realizing that the children in top class (the highest class) in the institution were forced to join new schools, she set up an extra class: class 1, "this is where the top class children will graduate to," says Rodgers, the institution supervisor. The set up includes all the necessary structures to ensure that future volunteers and the local teachers are able to easily run the class. These two volunteers will serve as an inspiration to the children and staff of Hope Children's Ministry but also to future volunteers and to anyone who is able to see their good work.

Both teachers in the USA, Manilla and Katy would easily pass as two volunteers who travelled to volunteer and met in Kenya. It is until you talk to them that you start to see and realize they are family (mother and daughter). Curious to know why they chose to travel and volunteer together I sought answers from Katy "I had always wanted to travel and volunteer at the same time, then the idea of bringing my mum hit me, especially because she has always been reluctant to travel abroad I thought of encouraging her to do it with me and here we are."



Manila is keen to know more about animals while she is here, maybe this explains why they favoured working in the conservation project other than teaching where they are more experienced. We thought of getting a whole different experience, that is why we choose the conservation project and what other place is better suited to work around close to animals like Kenya. It is unfortunate we had only 2 weeks I wish we could get more time, we love this place and the work we are doing." Laments Manilla.

Dirty Day Bondeni Maternity

Before and after photos showcasing the good work that Projects Abroad Kenya volunteers did at Bondeni maternity.





After



