

Community volunteering inspires youth to make global connection

Eighteen-year-old student Megan Timmins says volunteering in her own community for many years inspired a desire to take her volunteering experience to other parts of the world and become connected with new people that share the same motives and goals.

This spring, Megan will do just that when she travels to Kenya as part of the Global Youth Network. (GYN) But, to get there, she must first fundraise a large portion of her trip.

Raised just outside of Shelburne in the Township of Melancthon, Megan is the daughter of Charlene and Darcy Timmins. She attends the University of Guelph for Landscape Architecture at the School of Environmental and Rural Design. She says she has always had a very strong interest in social justice.

I am a firm believer that resources and opportunities should be equal to every human being, despite their race, sexuality, gender or any alternative factor, says Megan. As Canadians, I believe we should develop a relationship based on a genuine desire to help others around the globe develop equality.

Megan became involved with the GYN after seeing posters around campus advertising the volunteer group and their missions for 2016.

GYN is an organization that is built off of values that are very important to me, she says. The team leaders of my Kenya trip are outgoing, fun, laidback and share the same drives as myself.

According to GYN, the purpose of their student trips is to challenge and empower young people to use their lives to better understand and change the world they co-inhabit.

During the trip to Kenya, Megan says she wants to experience what it feels like to be a minority, so that she can understand what others experience when they come to Canada

Another goal for the young student is to impact the lives of the locals and truly make a difference in the lives of the women and families living with HIV, as well as build strong ties and relationships with the Kenyan community by listening to their stories and learning about their everyday lives.

For the first two weeks in Kenya, the team will be working in the slums of N'gong with an organization called Living Positive.

Living Positive works with disadvantaged women and their families living with HIV AIDS through HIV counselling and health education, Megan explains.

During the second two weeks, Megan's team will be working with the Ugunja Community Resource Centre.

This organization supplies the rural community with numerous services to better the lives of the individuals in the area, she says.

Megan will participate in Kenyan schooling focusing on early childhood development and also work in a clinic to bring fundamental services to the surrounding community dealing with micro financing and agricultural outreaches.

Megan must fundraise the cost of airfare, accommodations and food for the trip

Her team has conducted three successful bake sales on campus, she says, raising over \$1,000 and she is selling her artwork, as well as creating custom artwork, as part of her personal fundraising effort. She will also hold a spaghetti dinner sometime within the next month in Shelburne for those who wish to come out and support her.

Megan says she feels experiences like her trip to Kenya are valuable for her and other young people, "because it gives us the chance to understand a world outside of our own, and lets us connect with others to result in a greater good."

"Volunteering abroad provides so many new experiences, such as trying new foods and living like the locals. It also provides a break from our technology driven, fast paced lives here in Canada."

To learn more about Megan Timmins' trip or donate online visit www.tilt.com/tilts/megans-global-youth-trip-kenya.

To view or purchase her artwork visit Facebook at www.facebook.com/Happy-Thoughts-Artwork-548934305270347/?fref=ts. All money raised will go towards Megan's trip to Kenya.

By Marni Walsh