

## **Public health undergrad lends a hand in Ghana**

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Armed with vaccines, malaria prophylaxis, a mosquito net and minimal understanding of Ghana's Twi language ("mente asee," meaning "I don't understand," was the phrase I used the most), I set out for six weeks this summer to immerse myself in a new culture and gain firsthand experience in the health care of Ghana.

My reason for travelling to this small west-African nation was to volunteer with Unite For Sight, which restores vision in rural communities in Ghana, India and Honduras. Partnering with local eye clinics in these countries, the non-profit sends volunteers who assist doctors and nurses with eye care in isolated communities. My job was to distribute medication and glasses, conduct visual acuity tests and observe eye operations.

Four other volunteers and I worked with the Charity Eye Center in Kumasi. Coming from the paved and well-maintained roads of America, none of us were prepared for the five-hour trek over the bumpy, potholed dirt paths that link Accra (the capitol city) and Kumasi.

For the next month, we went out daily with the eye staff to some of the most remote areas in Ghana's Ashanti region. We met hundreds of patients ranging in age from newborns to 115, and experienced a wide a variety of eye conditions, from the minor to the debilitating.

We experienced the rich culture of Ghana ? music, cuisine and religion ?and interacted with the local people, whose reputation for hospitality is world-famous. The Ghanaians were eager to expose us to their way of life and immerse us in their traditions.

My experience in Ghana truly gave me a new perspective on healthcare, culture and life in general, and I appreciate the support from the Judith and Morris Henkin

Memorial Travel Scholarship that helped make it possible. It seemed that my time there was far too short; I am eager to return to this country as soon as I possibly can.

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