

Final Report  
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Cape Town, South Africa welcomed me with open arms. Over the last six months, I worked in a local primary school as the PT, aka PE teacher, for grades R (kindergarten) to grade 3. While planning this trip, my goals were to play professional soccer in Europe. I had made a soccer resume and was beginning my highlight reel. After tons of prayer and time, I did not feel called to move to Europe to play soccer. But I was not ready to give up the sport that gave me so much. In the back of my head, I remembered Heather Ferarri, a former teammate who had traveled to Nepal to work in a hospital. I made a bet with myself that if I could plan a LUMOS trip before the due date, I would make the trip a reality.



My goals for this trip were to coach soccer and work in a hospital as a nurse during the summer break. More specifically, I wanted to be fully immersed in a different culture, including trying new food, trying to learn a new language, and building relationships with locals. The project details included, "sports coaching for 7–13-year-olds at a local government-funded primary school." I did not know what kind of coaching would be required, but I figured I could come up with soccer drills off the top of my head. Secondly, I was hoping to work in a hospital to learn about the healthcare system and the role of a nurse, unfortunately, due to mix-ups, I was unable to get into a hospital setting. Once landing on the ground, I quickly learned that the school and children did not need a qualified coach. They needed someone to get them out of the classroom and exercise.

A typical day at the school went as follows. Wakeup call at 7:30, then a quick 15-minute walk to school. School started at 8:30 am, so my first PT class was from 8:30-9:30 am. I started by gathering supplies from the locker room and then gathering half the class. Each class went for PT twice a week for an hour and split up between boys and girls. Typical PT involved relay races, soccer, netball, jump ropes, and hula-hoops. Lunch from 10-10:30 am, followed by two more PT classes from 10:30-11:30 am and 12:30-1:30 pm. Although I was expecting to run children through soccer drills, I had a lot of fun coaching kids to run down, jump over a cone, and hula-hoop 3 times, all while carrying a tennis ball. I loved seeing the children's faces light up when they saw my wide-brimmed hat walking past the classroom. The boys and girls would argue about who would go out for PT first. I made it a goal to get to know most of the



staff members, even if it was only their names. I grew a relationship with these people and cherished their friendship. They would ask where I was if I was absent from school and how was my weekend. I will not only miss the students but also the staff.



While living in Cape Town, I lived with a host family. The house included Auntie V, mother of Jade, Ronaldo, and Rozano and grandmother to Sophia, Yonga, and M-Zizi, two South African students, plus any volunteers she was hosting at the time. The house was always loud; you could never sleep past 8 am because of the kettle running, the toaster popping, or Sophia screaming about her milkshake. These are things I will miss. Auntie V offered maize meal for breakfast, sandwich options for lunch, and a cooked meal for dinner. My host family was a middle-class family with a colored culture (colored was the politically correct term to use in Cape Town, to the US, it is the same as mixed race, half black and half white). I am proud of the relationships I made with my host family. I message them to this day with updates about our lives. I hope to one day introduce Auntie V to my children, so they will become her bonus grandchildren.

The colored community is very proud of being colored. Before the Apartheid, the blacks were slaves, the colored were the lowest class, the Muslims were middle class, and the whites sat at the top. After apartheid, the colored community felt that they had been left out. The blacks were freed from slavery, but what about all the coloreds that were displaced and not recognized for their skin? The colored community is loud, proud, and majority catholic. They taught me how to stand up for myself and speak up when something is bothering me. I am thankful for Auntie V offering up her home to me and other volunteers. Not only did I learn about the colored community, but I also learned about the Muslims being displaced from District 6 and the blacks being placed in townships. I visited both district 6 and the townships. It was heartbreaking to see children roaming the dirt roads all by themselves. The government is corrupt. With every election, the politicians running for president go into the townships and promise to fix issues, but once elected, they never go back. The living conditions are poor and inhumane.





After completing this trip, I am proud of myself for being brave enough to endure this adventure alone. I felt like I left a lasting impact on the children. I loved seeing the kids at the grocery store or the beach. They were so excited and would yell, "COACH!" I felt so loved by them! But it also showed how impactful I was on them. I showed the kids love, kindness, and patience. A lot of these children do not have a stable household, so showing them love and attention made them feel special. I also taught them loving boundaries, such as personal space and understanding that their actions have consequences (for example, going back to class

early if they were not listening). I accomplished what I came to South Africa to do, which was to love others and experience a different culture. I have so much love for all my students, which made it hard to say goodbye. I am proud of myself for not quitting and coming home at the beginning or even the middle. I knew being homesick would eventually happen, but through the feelings of missing home and my people, especially around the holidays, I learned how to be brave and strong amid being uncomfortable.

What I am most proud of are the relationships that I built with a handful of students. Lamique (1st grader), is a student who lived in the "flay," a local township. He would often go without food, have a runny nose, and no shoes on. He is one of seven children to a mother who drinks a lot and an absent father. Once I recognized this child's need for love and attention, I started to ask him to be a leader and help others, which made him feel important. My host mom also started packing him lunch for me to take to school. Ultimately, I realized that life is simple, you need food, water, and shelter to live, but there is no quality of life to live on those three things. There were other children such as Jayden (5th grade) whom I would take time to play chess with, or Jordan (4th grade) whom I taught English. All three of these boys often found themselves in the principal's office for fighting. But their actions did not make me love them less. I wanted to show them love and patience.



Not only did I learn a lot about myself, but I also grew into a better woman, American, nurse, coach, friend, sister, daughter, and auntie. I held all these titles while in Cape Town. As a solo traveler in Cape Town, I had to be aware of those around me and never put myself in situations in which I felt unsafe. I learned to be strong, confident, and alert. As an American, people often asked if I hated Trump or if I felt free as a woman due to the changes in politics surrounding abortions. These questions caused me to be uncomfortable but taught me to listen before speaking in order to understand where others are coming from. As a nurse, I felt responsible for



basic life skills. Whether that was fixing up a scrap from the playground or constantly running through CPR in a crowd, I was prepared when I had to put on my nursing hat. I was a coach/PT teacher at school, which gave me a sense of pride in the accomplishments that I had achieved with soccer and reminded me how much I loved the sport. I was a friend to many, including teachers, other volunteers, and strangers. And lastly, my favorite titles were sister, daughter, and auntie. My host family made me feel like I was a part of their family. Jade felt like a sister from the start. We often experienced similar emotions, including anxiety or being overly joyed. Auntie V welcomed me into her house but held me to the same expectations as her children and loved me as her own daughter. Finally, my favorite title, auntie. Sophia made me an Auntie, and I loved her for that. I loved spending quality time playing, watching mickey mouse, or bathing Sophia. I appreciated each title and will always remember the feeling of being welcome at 21 Brand rd.

My trip to Cape Town was a trip of a lifetime. I am so thankful that the Lumos committee chose me as a recipient. This trip has changed my life. Experiencing the culture of South Africa and living with my host family has made me more curious and compassionate when meeting people from a new culture. As I start working as a nurse at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, I will care for each patient with the same curiosity and compassion. I would love to find a way to work with children, whether that is working in pediatrics or coaching on the side. Lastly, I learned that I love seeing life from a child's perspective. Don't take life too seriously and enjoy the little things (such as blue tongues).



For future Lumos travelers, I would encourage them to go on the trip with an open mind. Have expectations of what you want to accomplish, but don't be afraid of letting them change. Don't feel like you must be doing something all the time. This was a problem I ran into at the beginning of my trip. I felt like I had to take every opportunity to adventure and explore when I was not at school. But the downside was that it wore me down so much that I couldn't do my job at the school or enjoy the experience. Don't be afraid to try new things, including food or experiences. While in South Africa, I tried liver and tongue, and most of my experiences and interactions felt new. My final piece of advice would be to be patient with yourself, it takes time to adjust to a new life. It won't be easy. This trip will be like no other, and that is what makes it so special. Take every emotion as it comes and feel each, don't force out the negative ones because that is where you'll grow the most.