

## ***Michael Coleman, '04***

*San Antonio, Belize*

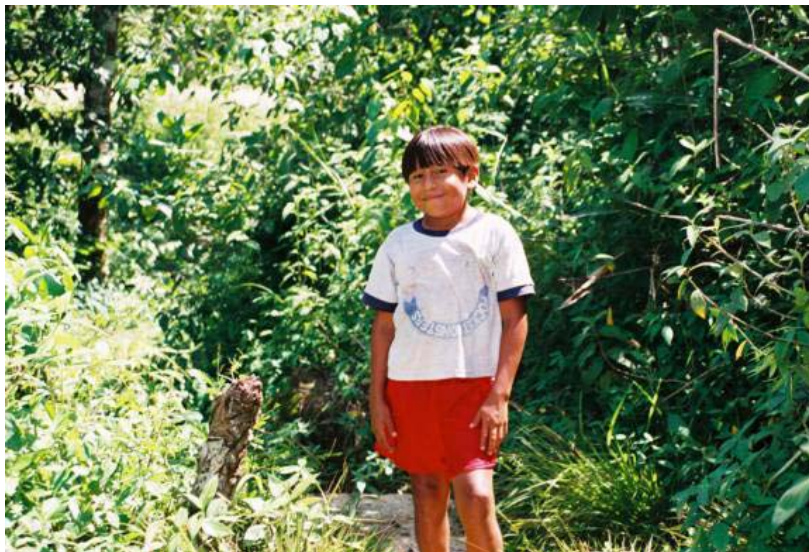
For six weeks in the months of July and August, 2003, Blake Moore and I traveled to the country of Belize. I really did not know what to expect, but what I found out was that sometimes, what you expect and what you experience are two completely different things. My experience in Belize enlightened my views about family, happiness and education. Family has always been an integral part of my life and as an aspiring physician I feel one has to have a family oriented personality to be the type of physician who can interact with his patients. In terms of happiness, I have never seen a happier group of children in my life. The circumstances of their lives are completely different than mine were, and yet you have a nostalgic feeling of something that is becoming lost in the United States from our children. Education is a fundamental right of every human being and allows for self-respect and the pursuit of happiness. Most of my students realize the value of getting an education. They may only have one pair of clothes to wear to school, but they were always clean. Every student arrived on time and took pride in learning. None of my students were required to attend my class, as it was an optional summer class to prepare them for future years. Blake and I ended up teaching Math and English because these are the areas the children needed the most work with. If I could do it all over again the same way, I would. I shared an unbelievable experience with my students and some day I look forward to returning to the village of San Antonio, Belize.



SAN ANTONIO, BELIZE



Typical thatched house in the village of San Antonio, Belize



This young boy here was not old enough to attend our classes, but he always wanted to be a part of the after school activities and the chance to trade stories about our different cultures



This is a picture of me teaching Math to my class of about thirty students. At first I had to realize that my “American” accent slowed the learning process for my students, but all of us quickly adapted to each other. Teaching gave me a sense of accomplishment, but my favorite times of the day were the class breaks as well as after school when I could learn about the different lives of my students.



My students really wanted to learn, there is no other way to say it. The respect they have for education is evident in their dedication and effort.



Here I am with Theodora, the person who cooked for us while we stayed in San Antonio. She also took care of us when we were not feeling well, in addition to helping raise her two year old grandson and the rest of large family.



No matter where I went, I never had trouble finding a smile. Happiness isn't judged by how expensive your car is, what kind of clothes you wear, or who you hang out with. It is just another part of every day life in Belize. I will never forget the smiles, the eagerness, and the friendships I made during my short but fulfilling trip to Belize