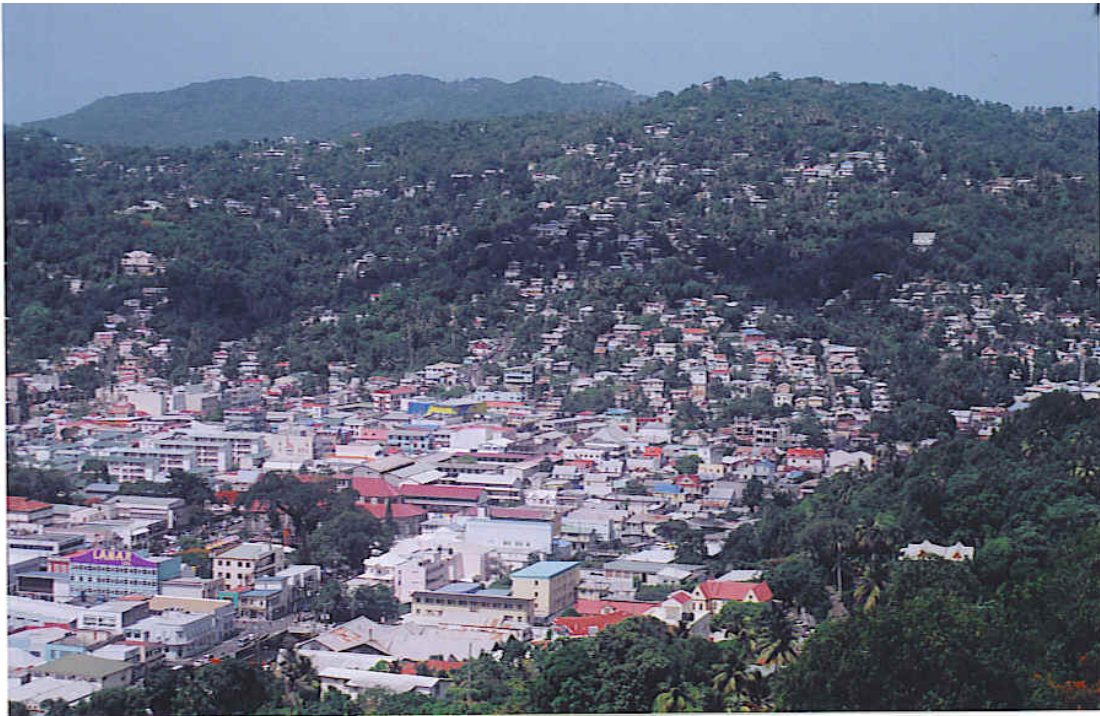


Courtney McHale, '05
St. Lucia, French Antilles

The summer of 2004 proved to be quite unique and unforgettable for me. I spent six weeks, from the middle of June until the middle of July, in Castries, St. Lucia, located in the Southern Caribbean. Adam Coleman and myself were welcomed with open arms into the home of Bertilla Jean Baptiste, a woman we quickly came to call Auntie. Auntie lives with three other boarders from the island, all involved in Catholic Missionary work. We instantly had ourselves a Caribbean family.



An overview of Castries, the Capital of St. Lucia

While we were there we worked in two different schools. In the mornings we found ourselves at the Dunnotar School, a school for mentally handicapped children and adults. Adam and I worked mostly with the children in the classroom. We helped the children learn their colors and the alphabet. With some of the more advance children we read stories and wrote responses. Every Tuesday afternoon we went with them to the beach for swim lessons. Seeing the children progress was very rewarding.



Tatianna (left) and Shaquim (right) both enjoying some afternoon activities at the Dunnottar School. Tatianna has been diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy and Shaquim with Down Syndrome.

At lunchtime, Adam and I would make our way over to the Upton Gardens Girls' Center. It is a school for teenage girls who have been abused at home and/or exhibit behavioral problems. We helped the girls with a variety of activities, from remedial schoolwork, to cooking, arts and crafts and some group counseling sessions.



The girls and I at the Upton's Center.

I particularly enjoyed having them teach me native dances during their physical education sessions. The girls were quite a handful to work with. It was heart breaking some days to see tempers flare up to such extremes in such young girls. What they have been through is something I can't even imagine. The girls were very good to us. They always treated us with respect and never once did their attitudes turn on us.



Spending an afternoon working with Shane who was one of the few autistic children we worked with at the Dunnottar School.

St. Lucia is hot, humid, rains only when you need to walk from one place to another, parts of stricken with painstaking poverty, and yet is the home of some of the most unforgettable experiences of my life.



The girls and the teachers pose one final time for us before we leave on our last day at Upton Gardens.