

Matthew Cummings and Anthony Conte, '09
Masaka, Uganda

For our Summer of Service, Anthony Conte and I traveled to Uganda, in East Africa. On our arrival, we spent a few days in Kampala, the capital, with the Semakula's, the host family I had stayed with during my semester abroad there the previous fall. The hospitality the Semakula's showed me during my semester there continued during our summer stay with them and they showed me and Anthony a great time as expected. After celebrating my 21st birthday with our Ugandan brothers and sister, Anthony and I traveled west to the small town of Masaka where we were set to volunteer at an HIV/AIDS clinic run by the organization Uganda Cares at Masaka Hospital. Uganda Cares provides free services and medications to people living with HIV/AIDS around Masaka. In addition, we were to assist in outreach programs with Kitovu Mobile AIDS Organization, a Catholic medical group that provides free anti-retrovirals (ARVs), the medications for HIV/AIDS, in rural communities.



Anthony, our brother Dan, and I during our first few days in Kampala.

At the clinic, Anthony and I worked closely with the two physicians there, Drs. John and Francis Ssali. We sat in with them while they examined their patients and documented their symptoms and the subsequent medications that were prescribed to them. Sometimes seeing upwards of 60 patients a day, the dedication and compassion that Dr. John and Dr. Francis displayed provided a hopeful model of what Anthony and I aspire to be as future physicians.



Clients of Uganda Cares waiting to be seen by the clinic's staff.

On Fridays, the clinic provided pediatric care to children living with HIV/AIDS. Anthony and I brought coloring books and colored with and played soccer/football (or in the local vernacular of Luganda, omupiira) with the children during the pediatric clinic. The kids always told us that coming to play football with the bazungu was the highlight of their week. It was our privilege to do so.



Anthony, Dr. John, and I at the Uganda Cares HIV/AIDS clinic at Masaka Hospital.



Dr. Francis and I

On our days away from the clinic, Anthony and I traveled to the countryside surrounding Masaka Town with Kitovu Mobile to help distribute ARVs to these communities. Outreach programs such as these are extremely important as they provide a bridge to health for the rural poor living with HIV/AIDS, many of which are sometimes too sick or financially unable to travel to the hospital to receive care. Another important aspect of Kitovu Mobile's mission is the provision of palliative care for terminal HIV/AIDS patients suffering from severe pain. In addition to supplying patients with ARVs, the palliative care specialists from Kitovu Mobile helped ease the pain of patients in the throes of the opportunistic infections such as Cryptococcal meningitis or the cancer Kaposi's sarcoma. The bravery and resilience of both the health care providers and patients was something that Anthony and I deeply respected.



Anthony and I on a rural outreach program with Kitovu Mobile.



Betty (a nurse from Kitovu Mobile), Anthony, and I helping to prepare medications for a patient.

All and all, Anthony and I truly enjoyed our time in Masaka and Uganda. As expected, we both agreed that the people we traveled there to serve taught us far more than we could ever teach them about humility, bravery, and kindness. The generosity exhibited by each and every Ugandan we spent time with humbled us to the core. It is this kindness of spirit that we can hope to replicate one day as physicians.