



## **Bricks and Wild Animals**

*“Our mission is to immerse ourselves in Ugandan culture, to seek the betterment of others and ourselves, and to provide meaningful service to the people of Uganda.”*

International Volunteers—Uganda official mission statement for spring/summer 2001

The Mukono Town Academy (MTA), a secondary school of approximately five hundred students, is located in Mukono Town, an agricultural base of around 300,000 people.

The school was co-founded and is now owned by Christopher Mugimu, a native Ugandan and doctoral candidate in educational leadership and foundations at BYU. At the academy, BYU students participated in classroom activities and extracurricular events, worked with teachers and staff on school and curriculum development projects, and engaged in service activities to help the growing school meet its pressing needs.



Within a week of their arrival, the group began to serve at the academy, beginning with manual labor—clearing ground and digging a foundation for boys’ shower facilities. “We moved bricks from the big pile over to the plot of land we cleared the week before,” said Patrick Lee and Meredith Stockman. Students Janna Usher and Bryn Jensen reported, “There was only one wheelbarrow and nine people, so you could say there was a lot of free time between turns. Lora Cook suggested finding buckets or other materials to transport the sand. This helped us realize the need to be creative, especially in developing countries where you often have to get the job done with limited resources.”

In addition to their physical labor, the group began teaching computer classes. At first, teaching as well as interacting with students of a different culture—who don't view punctuality the same way Americans do—was a bit of a challenge, but the BYU students soon began to adjust. "Class rotations were much smoother, and computer class (Microsoft Word) worked much better with an assignment on the board," said Lee and Stockman. "In the computer lab, certain students, determined to learn, worked hard with their individual BYU tutors," noted Usher and Michelle Carr. "Our service hours allowed for a lot of growth for us and the students. Plus, the friendships we made with these students will probably leave a bigger impression than the overall service ever will."

No Events