

### **My name is Tristina Brown**

I am a senior at Minnesota State University, Mankato, pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology with minors in Ethnic Studies and Community Health. I am a white American who was raised in an upper middle class family with eleven brothers and sisters in a small town in Minnesota. And I thought I had it rough that is until I had the experience of a lifetime on the other side of the world. An experience that has left me wanting to use what I have to provide something so simple, yet important to others who are so unbelievably less privileged than I ever was.

### **My Experience in South Africa**

I recently returned from a semester studying abroad in South Africa. Interstudy is the organization that made studying in South Africa possible for me and 10 other college students from around the world. While in South Africa, Interstudy took our group of students to Hermanus. Hermanus is a beautiful town in South Africa along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. Hermanus is a well-known holiday spot for affluent South Africans. Hermanus holds an Annual Whale Festival when the whales, dolphins and other marine animals migrate to the coast between the months of June and November each year. It was here at the coast that I was first introduced to the inspiration for my mission--the children of Zwelihle and the Zwelihle Summer School. The hostel where I was staying had information on the Zwelihle Summer School and I soon became involved.

Zwelihle is a township next to Hermanus. Townships were areas where the "Blacks and Colored" were forced to living during Apartheid. The current population of Zwelihle is about 10,000 Xhosa people and more than 1/3 are seriously deprived. The neighboring community of Hermanus offers seasonal work to adults from Zwelihle during the summer holidays. For many it may be the only work available during the year. The Zwelihle schools and crèches close during the holidays. Unfortunately, this leaves the children of Zwelihle with no parental or other supervision and at risk for accidents, abuse and/or delinquency. The Zwelihle Summer School was started in October of 1998 to reduce this risk. Then in December 1998, the first summer school began.

The goals of the summer school are to keep children off the streets and in a safe environment, to offer children useful activities and to give children and volunteers new knowledge and skills, thus giving them confidence. Other goals include giving volunteers valuable work experience within an organization, helping them to acquire new skills and knowledge (communication, working on a team, planning and organizing, management, teaching), giving the volunteers knowledge about and experience working with children and to give people from different backgrounds and nationalities an opportunity to work together as a team and to learn from each other and to care for the well-being, meals, medical attention and counseling of all those involved.

My position at the summer school for a month was workshop leader. Each day I would take a group of children and a local volunteer and hold a workshop on health concerns such as nutrition and hygiene. Other workshops were held on English, drama, sports, music, arts and crafts. Children and volunteers also had the opportunity to participate in other events such as swimming and library excursions. Some groups of children also put on a circus and puppet show for the Zwelihle community.

Tristina Brown, April 2002

### **Playground structure**

Tristina was granted permission to build a playground structure at Lukhanyo Primary School, where the Zwelihle Summer School was held.

She raised money by collecting and selling used books and magazines.

In 2003 the playground was built with the help of local volunteers.