

Students hunt for souls, adventure

Teens travel to South Africa, Rwanda, Belize

BY PARKER MOON
Staff Writer

Laughter, joy, and love filled the air last summer as local students participated in a variety of mission and vacation trips around the world.

Seniors Curry Wilson, Drew Neece, Caleb Masters, and freshman Caroline Masters travelled to Belize in July on a mission trip, along with 34 others making the trip with the goal of helping others.

“The purpose of the trip was to spread the word about Christ to a country that is less fortunate than us,” Caleb Masters said.

The six-day trip included a children’s Vacation Bible School, a doctor who prescribed eyeglasses and sunglasses, and a sports camp that taught local children how to play American football and basketball. Other volunteers helped rebuild and paint a church.

“Building the church was cool,” Caroline Masters said. “The people were amazed to see us doing something that they do on a regular basis.”

Caroline’s father, Brian Masters, also participated in the journey not only to help with the building project, but also to baptize converts. Brian is a deacon at Elliott Street Church of Christ in Breckenridge and is in charge of the youth ministry there.

“For me, baptizing the children was life changing,” he said. “Knowing that you had a major part in their lives and helped them start their life with Jesus was awesome.”

Masters baptized a total of six people while he was there.

“Watching the people there get baptized, turning their lives to Christ and knowing that we helped them do that, was the highlight,” Neece said.

While there, Wilson said that they traveled to the Caribbean Sea where a man took off his shirt and explained that he was



Junior Madison Brown (left) helps women in Rwanda mold mud bricks to be used to the rebuild a house for a man in need. Brown and five others left for the two-week mission trip in mid-June. The trip was sponsored by First Baptist Church of Albany. The church is planning another trip to Africa during spring break.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY THOMAS ALY



Seniors Curry Wilson and Drew Neece (left) speak to a group of children on their mission trip to Belize. Seventh grader Hannah Trail (top) poses with trophy kudu in South Africa last summer.

PHOTOS BY TAMMY MASTERS AND TAMARA TRAIL

wanting to get baptized for all the wrong doings he had done earlier in life. He said that he was part of the wrong crowd, such as gangs who did drugs and other bad things.

When the man took off his shirt, he had scars on his back from being stabbed twenty times while he was sleeping. That incident changed his perspective of life.

“To get to the Caribbean Sea,” Wilson said “you had to

travel down a road that was not maintained with pot holes and power lines in the middle of the road.”

On the last day, volunteers were able to go shopping, snorkeling, or swimming in the sea.

“It was nice to get involved in the culture and meet new people,” Wilson said. “I would definitely do it again in a heart beat.”

There were other mission trips during the summer including one to Rwanda attended by Madison

Brown and five others.

Like most mission trips, the two-week trip was to share the word of God to people, but for Madison it was a deeper experience.

“For me, it was connecting with God and reaching out to others,” Brown said. “The highlight of the trip was knowing the impact I had on the people over there.”

While there, the group sponsored by First Baptist Church

of Albany, made mud bricks, fed street kids, and held church services.

“We built mud bricks to help a man rebuild his house who lost everything during the genocide,” Brown said.

Various speakers spread the word during church services.

“There was already a preacher over there that we met up with,” Brown said. “Thomas Aly helped out with the church services too, mainly trying to teach them about purity because they weren’t really taught that part of the Bible.”

Brown said she would love to go back again to help others and enjoy the culture.

For a hunter, going to Africa would be a hunt of a lifetime. Most hunters don’t get to go until later in life, but for one-seventh grader, dreams became a reality early.

Hannah Trail traveled to South Africa in July for a 10-day trip with family and friends. The trip consisted of hunting, hanging around the fire, and enjoying views of the landscape.

“The trip was really cool because we got to hunt a lot of animals, eat weird food, and hang out with a bunch of friends,” Trail said.

From a hunter’s standpoint, Trail said she had a successful hunt, killing an ostrich, zebra, and a kudu that had big swirly horns.

“There was a lot of excitement coming from my mom, dad, and sisters when I shot my animals,” Trail said.

With all of the animals to see, places to be, and friends to hang out with, Trail was most happy when with friends and family.

“I had a lot of fun with all my friends, and we got a lot closer to each other during the 10 days,” Trail said. “It was also fun to see what animals they shot, and to see the excitement between them and the family.”

“Also, while we were all driving around in the Jeep, we got three feet away from a lion,” Trail said.

The summer wasn’t just fun and games. It included fellow students taking time to go help others and teach others about God, while others grew closer to friends.

Educators inspired by past teachers

Hotchkin comes from family of teachers

BY GENEVIEVE STUNKARD
Features Editor

It’s not uncommon for students to be unsure of exactly what they’d like to do after they finish school. Some probably plan to pursue their passions, while others say they’ll be happy as long as they make a decent salary.

For some, this indecisiveness can last until the sophomore year of college.

Twenty-two-year-old Melanie Hotchkin, who began her first-ever teaching job in August as the junior high math teacher, originally studied to be a dental hygienist before she realized her true passion was education.

“Both of my parents are teachers in Anson, and my sister teaches in Abilene,” Hotchkin said. “I love teaching, and I always have. It’s very much in my blood.”

Hotchkin’s mother, an elementary school reading teacher, originally hoped for her to break the chain of educators in her family.

“My mom didn’t want me to feel forced to become a teacher because that’s what everyone else in my family does, but I had to do *something*,” Hotchkin said. “So when I got braces in high school, I became interested in dental hygiene, and I interned at a dentist’s office in Abilene for a while.”

After beginning her studies in college, Hotchkin realized that teaching was where her heart was and always had been.

“Near the end of my sophomore year, I completely changed my major,” Hotchkin said. “I had been taking almost all science classes to become a dental hygienist, so when I made the switch, I had to take summer courses in order to catch up on all the math classes I needed to become a teacher, but it was worth it.”

English teacher Jennifer Everitt, like Hotchkin, had not originally planned on entering the education system after college.

“I didn’t want to be a teacher at first,” Everitt said. “However, a college professor of mine decided that it was my calling, and she had me start giving lectures in her class. It was a big deal, since I was only a sophomore in college.”

Everitt expresses that she is pleased with her career choice.

“I really enjoy teaching here,” Everitt said. “The kids are great, and it’s a good family atmosphere.”

Hotchkin’s desire to become an educator came not only from her heritage, but also from her ambition to improve the learning experience for students.

“I’ve always wanted to better education,” Hotchkin said. “I had an awful teacher in fourth grade that scared us all. She influenced me in an opposite way, making me want to make school a more positive place.”

Likewise, Jennie Bailey, now beginning her tenth year teaching at Albany High School, became a teacher in order to help improve the learning atmosphere for students, as well as to fulfill a more personal desire.

“My interest in becoming a teacher originally came from wanting to be a stay-at-home mom,” Bailey said. “I think teaching itself somewhat of a

motherly job.”

Bailey says she believes that to be an educator certain passions and skill sets are essential.

“I think that you need to have a love for kids and passion for your subject,” Bailey said. “It’s also necessary to stay organized, treat your work professionally, and be *patient*.”

Everitt shared similar ideas.

“I believe a teacher should be understanding, trustworthy, and very passionate about his or her subject,” Everitt said.

Ashley Terrell, now the second-youngest teacher on campus, claims she learned the key to successful teaching from and was influenced by a high school teacher of hers.

“I’ve wanted to be a teacher since elementary school,” Terrell said, “but I would say it was my high school geometry and pre-calculus teacher who made me want to teach math. She was very strict with us and had high expectations. That was the reason we were so successful.”

Hotchkin agrees that being somewhat strict is necessary in order to be a good teacher.

“I think teachers need to be optimistic about their students’ abilities, very caring, and good disciplinarians,” Hotchkin said. “You need to be understanding, but you can’t just be mushy all the time. You need good discipline to push students to do their best.”

Overall, Hotchkin says she is very pleased with her career choice and her ease finding a job in a small town.

“I’m glad I chose a small town like Albany, because everyone’s been very welcoming and helpful,” Hotchkin said. “I’m really enjoying my job. It’s everything I thought it would be and more, and I can easily see myself doing it for the rest of my life.”



Junior high math teacher, Melanie Hotchkin, assists eighth grader Gregori Mikeska with an assignment. Hotchkin, a first-year teacher, comes from a long line of educators, including her parents who both teach in Anson. PHOTO BY GENEVIEVE STUNKARD