

**YuFund**  
**Lauren Thomas**  
*Psychology*

## **Wildlife conservation volunteer**

During this summer, I travelled to Windhoek Namibia and spent two weeks volunteering with Naankuse's Foundation on their Wildlife conservation programme where I stayed on their wildlife sanctuary. Naankuse is a conservation charity that provides a second chance for injured animals or animals from conflict cases often with humans, with promoting conservation through education and research. This was hugely eye opening and interesting to talk to people from such a range of backgrounds and ages and discover what journey in life they are on.

At first it was daunting to try and find other people in my team but I have found it has increased my confidence to talk to new people. The Lapa was the only place where there was Wifi and there was no service at all in Namibia. I think this made me have a detox from my phone and whilst volunteering I only used my phone as a camera.



One of my favourite activities was Rhino Rangers Lite. We drove around whilst our guide looked for rhino tracks. We made sure we were down wind from them and proceeded to follow them until we were very close! This was an amazing exhilarating experience I will never forget, getting so close to these huge ancient animals.

Some of the other activities included; small animal feeding, K9 anti-poaching training, enclosure cleaning, Baboon walk, Camera traps and Carnivore feeding. They also had a school for the children of the staff and as a volunteer you could go over to help. I went three times; once to teach them a dance routine with another volunteer I met, to teach them how to draw mandala cards and also brought them over to the stables to teach them about the horses.

I would like to say a huge thank you to my sponsors as this incredible experience would not have been possible without you. Not only have I learnt so much about successful animal conservation but also I have grown so much in self-confidence and developed my ability to get along with many types of personalities and cultures. I am forever grateful for having this opportunity!







**YuFund**  
**Rebecca Hazel-Owram**  
*Health Sciences*

## **Reef Conservation Project on the Belize Barrier Reef**

Reef Conservation International is one of the leading NGO's in Belize for undertaking marine conservation work on the Belize Barrier Reef. Volunteers who undertake the programme have the opportunity to get involved and gain hands on experience in marine conservation, gaining environmental awareness around issues which are facing not just Belize but the whole world.

One of the main focuses of the project are Lionfish. Since their arrival to the Belize Barrier Reef they are causing significant damage to the eco system of the reef. The conservation programme educates volunteers about lionfish and then teaches them how to eradicate them safely when scuba diving, ensuring no harm is caused to other marine species or the reef. In the two weeks I was volunteering I attended lectures on lionfish, plastic in the ocean, turtles and Cnidarians. As well as this each week a beach clean-up is conducted on neighbouring islands, where the amount of rubbish which is collected is weighed and the data is provided to the Belize government.

As well as this I have developed many personal skills. I feel I have increased my confidence in communicating with people from a range of different countries whilst learning about their culture. Giving a presentation about my trip to the local Parkinson's group helped me develop my presentation skills and public speaking. I learnt to be resourceful and

adaptable as Belize is not an easy country to navigate at times. I have made friends from around the world who I have stayed in touch with.

I would like to thank the YuFund for the funding provided to me to complete this project. It really was a once in a lifetime trip which has made a lasting impact on my life. Without your kind donations, this trip would not have been possible.



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**Somaya Hajyousef**

*HYMS*

## Plan My Gap Year medical programme

The PMGY medical programme gave me insight into eastern medicine, composed of natural remedies, herbs and yoga, as well as Indonesian attitudes towards healthcare, and their collectivist culture where people hold their hands out to anyone who needs help. This will greatly benefit me in my medical career considering the diverse range of patients I'll be helping.

I visited the Tapasya stroke centre established in 2016 by a lady who experienced a stroke herself. This helped me improve my communication skills with individuals who cannot speak English through body language and appropriate use of google translate. I also visited a birth clinic which showed me a different, more holistic approach to pregnancy and birth. Their attitudes towards pain are very different to western ones. They embrace pain and express its benefits. This contradicted my previous opinions of giving birth, which were medicalised. Instead of focusing on how to obliterate the pain, they focus on how to deal with pain, and how to listen to and embrace your body's needs and instincts.

A life-changing situation I experienced on the programme was visiting a mental health facility. I cannot put into words how heartbroken I was after visiting this centre. My heart shattered as I walked through the building which had doors, like prison cells, smelt of faeces, and lacked toiletries, food, clothes, and bedding. The individuals looked malnourished and traumatised. Their faces pleaded for help. The facility is severely underfunded, therefore requires charities and fundraisers to support them.



Having no previous experience setting up charities, being a first-generation medical student, and coming from a lower socioeconomic background, I developed management and communication skills alongside my confidence, as I had to seek contacts, pitch my ideas, and set up the finances concerning the cause. All of this was initially overwhelming, however, has taught me resilience and how to manage the complexity of organising large projects. I would love to thank the sponsors for helping me achieve a lifelong dream of travelling to a different country, gaining essential skills, and starting a project which will change the lives of people who are less fortunate and allow me to leave a mark in the Indonesian community.





**YuFund**  
**Samuel Lane**  
*Politics*

## **Volunteering with Play Action International in Uganda**

Volunteering in Uganda over the summer was an incredibly rewarding experience. The aim of the charity Play Action International was to build a playground in a rural primary school in Uganda, in order to aid the education and development of the local children.

After we had finished our days building, we would spend our afternoons engaging in creative play sessions with children from the primary school. Our free time was filled with endless games of football behind the school with local children.

Having the opportunity to meet and bond with many school children, the local builders and staff who we worked with and many local villages was a wonderful privilege. Along with completing our project, personal highlights included the opportunity to visit both the cities of Kampala and Jinja, go kayaking and evening swimming down the river Nile, accidentally attending a graduation ceremony and taking part in a match with a local football team.

Whilst at the primary school, we lived exclusively off freshly made local Ugandan cuisine, which included very fresh fruit and lots of Ugandan Rolexes. We bathed outside with buckets of cold water and used a hole in the ground as the toilet. These differences from home life, however, enhanced not diminished my enjoyment of the project. It was a joy to experience a civilisation and geography so distinct from my own, to meet so many wonderfully hospitable people often with scarce material resources and to help build something that will have a long, genuine and positive impact on the local community.

The trip greatly enhanced my cultural understanding of sub-Saharan Africa and the nation of Uganda in particular. It helped develop my ability to work, bond and engage with people from vastly different backgrounds to my own and further encouraged my desire to travel. The trip will also help with my studies of international relations, in particular content concerning developing countries and my module on the rising powers. I would like to extend a massive thank you to YuFund for helping to fund this invaluable experience and opportunity.



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**Hannah Aves**

*Natural Sciences*

## **Angloville English Language Immersion Programme**

My volunteering week began in a shopping centre car park just south of Krakow, Poland, when I met for the first time both the group of children I'd be working with, and the other volunteers like me.

On the first official day of the programme, I was thrown straight into action on a couple of coaches as the children and us volunteers headed off to a remote hotel in the town of Dobczyce. As an introvert, I like to take in the surroundings and people before attempting conversations, but in my position as a 'Native Speaker' (the English-speaking volunteers), I had the responsibility to take a confident lead and encourage the children to converse together.

The aim of the week was to provide an immersion into an English-speaking community for the Polish children, to encourage their confidence when speaking English. As a Native Speaker and mentor, I had a full-on role from 9am to 9pm every day, with a packed schedule. Despite this demanding routine, this was one of the most rewarding and enjoyable experiences I've had.

Each day, I led around five 40-minute conversation sessions, each with two children, so that by week's end I had got to spend time with all the children there. It was amazing to communicate, become friends, exchange cultural differences and ideas as we spoke about different topics introduced to us by the coordinators.



Some of the other skills that I had the chance to develop over the week included leadership, taking initiative and resilience. I believe having the experience to travel and volunteer abroad will always have a way of getting me out of that comfort zone and in doing so push me towards more gratifying and worthwhile experiences.

I was very grateful for the opportunity to partake in this role and to be working with such an amazing group of volunteers and children. I want to thank the people who are so kindly able to sponsor students like me, giving us the ability to facilitate and enjoy eye-opening and fulfilling experiences.