

## Courtice resident shares lessons in Africa

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CLARINGTON -- A Courtice resident recently headed to Uganda, Africa with hopes to make an impact on the teachers and, ultimately, the children when it comes to the environment.

Carla Taylor, a recent Royal Roads University graduate who has a master's degree in disaster emergency management, has a love of community-centred conservation, and jumped at an opportunity to help introduce environmental education in Uganda through the Jane Goodall Institute.

"I've always wanted to go to Africa," she said. "I applied and four months later with much fundraising we were on our way."

She went with a friend who is a school teacher in Kitchener as part of a small group that ran workshops for local elementary school teachers.

The majority of disasters in Uganda are droughts, floods and deforestation, Ms. Taylor said after returning from her three-week trip. The volunteers explained to the local teachers different environmental concepts and ways to inform the kids about the seriousness of the issues.

"They were generally already aware of the problems they had," she said.

But the role of the Jane Goodall volunteers was to help them move past simply knowing about the problems to tackling them, as well as getting that message to the kids, she said.

"Mom might not listen to a public service announcement but she will listen to children when they say, 'Mom, you can't do that,'" she said.

The school system in Uganda seemed to use very formal teaching techniques, such as repetition, she said. The volunteers introduced the teachers to different methods, such as the effectiveness of field trips to integrate into the lessons, as well as games and activities about the environment that the children can understand.

They worked together to identify specific problems within the school, such as water contamination and garbage sorting methods.

The Jane Goodall volunteers also left them some lesson plans to get the kids on track, something Ms. Taylor felt was appreciated by the "overworked, underpaid, under-resourced" teachers.



Ryan Pfeiffer / Metroland

COURTICE -- Courtice resident Carla Taylor taught a collaborative workshop created by the Jane Goodall Institute in Uganda, Africa, which focused on developing lesson plans, games and activities about the environment that children can understand. July 26, 2011.

"There were between 40 and 100 kids in a classroom and the teachers don't make very much," she said.

She exchanged e-mails with the local teachers, and looks forward to seeing how the children adapt to the new teaching plans.

She feels that with the variety of environmental features in Uganda, such as the wetlands and the desert, it could become a great tourism spot, and is hopeful for its future.

"It's in their own best interest, right?" she said.