

Katie Reynolds, Northwestern undergraduate student plays frisbee with children from the village of Muhatoni in South Africa



KATHRYN JARUSESKI, NORTHWESTERN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT

The Power of Play

I NEVER APPRECIATED THE POWER a lightweight plastic disk might have until this moment. Books, papers, and pens—these are the traditional tools of learning and education. The immersive experience eschews didactic learning in favor of direct communication and cultural exchange. From my immersion, I learned it is not the experience as a whole but distilled moments in time that have a transformative ability. With hot, dusty air filling our lungs and soft,

red earth beneath our feet, we were truly a world apart from Chicago. In the small village of Muhatoni in the northeast of South Africa, an expert Frisbee player met her match. Katie could not speak Venda, nor could the children speak English. Katie, my classmate in this photo, had never worn traditional Venda clothing before, nor had the children ever held a Frisbee. Yet, these significant cultural barriers and disparities became arbitrary in this joyful moment of

play and mutual understanding. In these small moments, we build connections that bridge us together forcing us to examine the familiar in an unfamiliar way. We want to hear stories and have experiences that are so foreign to us that we begin to question “foreignness” itself. All of this, I learned from a tiny piece of plastic.

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YOU'RE INVITED! We invite you to submit your photos along with a brief (approximately 200 words) description of why these images are important in your understanding of a person, place, idea, or incident from your experiences in international education. The photos could be of a simple moment on your home campus involving international students, a major event in an exotic location, or anything in between. The editors of *International Educator* will run selections on this page throughout the year. Please contact us for submission details at elainal@nafsa.org.