Matt Schneider, a sophomore studying geography, traveled abroad with the Global May Uganda program.

“I chose the Global May Uganda program because I thought it would be an experience out of the ordinary, and it was in the best way. Traveling to Uganda has given me a great frame of reference in my coursework and activities back in Ohio. It has inspired me to rethink what I want to spend my life doing.”

Program: Global May Uganda
Location: Uganda
Rank: Sophomore
Major: Geography

“I think it's usually premature to call anything "life-changing" soon after it happened, but a few months ago I returned to the United States after what will probably be a life-changing month in Uganda. Along with 12 other Buckeyes, who quickly became great friends, I was welcomed into a new family's home as a returning son/brother and witnessed the inspiring work of doctors and nurses in the fights against malnutrition and HIV/AIDS. We practiced our Luganda (the primary native language in the country's central region) with random strangers in Kampala and passed within 20 feet of herds of elephants...
and giraffes in Murchison Falls National Park. We spoke with groups of 40-50 teenage students at a rural school about the importance of safe sex and STD prevention and cruised down the Nile River, surrounded by crocodiles. Our trip had the makings of an amazing adventure, but we were there for much more than a simple pleasure tour. We did not shuttle from one 5-star hotel/restaurant to the next but actually tried to become immersed in the communities we happened to be in, whether that meant bucket showers and holes in the ground (for you know what) to eating fried crickets and enough matooke, a thick, tasteless plantain mash, to last a lifetime. Really, I don't need any more matooke.

Uganda's landscapes are breathtaking, and the country is not without its share of challenges, but Uganda is also home to the world's highest concentration of ethnic and linguistic diversity, incredible innovators working to improve their own communities and a good deal of what must be the world's kindest people. Our group of mostly well-off Americans was not there to be reminded of "how much better off we have it in America" or to impose any kind of solutions to the problems we could identify. We were there to listen to, learn from, and make connections with our fellow citizens of the world. More than any photo or souvenir, I will mostly cherish the relationships I was able to build during my short stay.

I chose the Global May Uganda program because I thought it would be an experience out of the ordinary, and it was in the best way. Traveling to Uganda has given me a great frame of reference in my coursework and activities back in Ohio. It has inspired me to rethink what I want to spend my life doing. Traveling to Uganda was not a once in a lifetime experience, only because I know I'll be back.”