

## Press Release

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Ugandan and American youth pose for a volleyball team photo.

## **OC YOUTH RUNS VOLLEYBALL CLINIC IN AFRICA**

For one Orange County teenager, volleyball should not be limited to the sunny beaches and air-conditioned gyms of Southern California. This summer Chris Gibbons, from Yorba Linda, took his passion for volleyball to the remote regions of Africa.

Chris, 17, a student at Orange Lutheran High School, recently returned from a two-week mission trip to aid impoverished villages in southeast Uganda. As part of a group from Hope4Kids International, he helped with missionary efforts that included feeding orphaned children, visiting critically-ill patients in a hospital and dedicating a well. However, for Chris, his driving goal in Africa was to bring the sport of volleyball to young students at a boarding school.

The volleyball effort, while in Africa, included the help of a dozen American teenagers but was spearheaded by Chris who is a three-year starter on the varsity volleyball team at Orange Lutheran and also competes nationally for the Anaheim-based Riptides Volleyball Club. Prior to departing to Africa, Chris collected donated equipment from the USA Volleyball Association, AVP, his volleyball club and several high schools. Items shipped to Uganda included four regulation outdoor volleyball nets, 45 volleyballs, two ball carts, a score board and 300 shirts.

Over the course of several days, two regulation-size volleyball courts (including steel poles with concrete bases) were constructed at the True Vine School in Tororo, Uganda with the help of numerous American and Ugandan volunteers.

Chris commented, "I did not realize how much effort it would take just to build the volleyball courts. The ground was volcanic rock and it took two days to dig the holes with a pick, sledge and chisel. We mixed the concrete by hand on the ground. True Vine School now has outdoor courts as good as many here in the States."

While the courts were being constructed, Chris and his team also ran a volleyball clinic every afternoon. Local children from the ages of four to seventeen participated in some basic skills training.

“It was so rewarding to laugh with these kids as we peppered the ball back and forth and taught them how to set,” said Chris. “They are very athletic and picked it up quickly.”

After a couple of days of volleyball lessons, the project culminated with a small tournament between the Ugandan teenagers and the American missionaries.

“As the coach, I decided I could play for the Uganda team in this final match,” stated Chris. “It was exciting to play all out with my new African teammates.”

The score was back and forth, with an afternoon thunderstorm approaching and threatening to put an early end to this first Tororo, Uganda Volleyball Match. Just before the rain let loose, the Ugandans pulled ahead to win 25 to 23. With a loud cheer they declared victory and promised to win a rematch by an even larger margin as soon as Chris and their new American friends can make it back to Africa.

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Chris Gibbons, in the t-shirt on the right, supervises the volleyball court construction in Tororo, Uganda.



Chris Gibbons, right foreground, and his team run a volleyball clinic in Uganda.



Chris Gibbons plays with Ugandan orphans as he teaches them to jump high in volleyball.



The Uganda team uses their new volleyball skills to set up a spike.



With a storm approaching, Chris Gibbons, far left, presents to the True Vine School leaders some of the donated volleyball equipment.

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