

Cristiano testimonial for CART

My name is Cristiano, I'm a graphic/interaction designer from Italy and I stayed at CART (Center for Appropriate Rural Technology) for 1 month.

I was looking for a volunteer project in Traskei on the internet and that's how I found this center. I was hoping to find a place where also my presence was required and not only financial support.

Was it worth it?

At the beginning I was moved by curiosity for the xhosa culture... and I found myself being part of a different story and I would like to thank Dianne and Luke for this. The different story is about people who are fighting some of the greatest forms of poverty: the poverty of ideas, the poverty of self-esteem and, in the end, the victim mentality.

Financial support is easy with an immediate reward to the donor, but CARTS approach goes much deeper than that. CART focuses on people and their empowerment, the center aims to become an example of self-sustainability, a place of excellence from which communities can learn and develop their own skills.

While I was there I met people who can now take responsibility for themselves and their community. They used to be alcohol addicts just less than 2 years ago. it's a long process and not always successful.

It's very different from any kind of hippie dream and sometimes this battle can be quite stressful. At CART there's a long term commitment, but it takes a lot of energy, that's why I think they need help from other people joining their long term cause.

Keep in mind that's up to you to help CART and have fun at the same time.

Ok, that was the hard part, i decided to put it first; now comes the usual great stuff that everyone, I guess, already told you. People in the village are friendly and the landscape is stunning. The food made for the volunteers is really good, Dianne is an excellent cook... and I know what I'm talking about.

There is valuable work to be done in building CART itself or working in the garden, much of this work is easy for short term volunteers to get involved in. I made fresh pasta with the flour which i grained from the wheat that we planted. I made mud bricks to build a new school, i cut poles, planted soy beans, I even helped taking care of a baby monkey for a few days...

As a graphic designer I made labels for the preserves made by the women of Sicambeni. I documented the activities of the center and put together a presentation... I took a lot of photos...

So in the end i was free to spend my time balancing what was necessary with my skills.