



**College of Art + Design**  
*School of Architecture*  
*Office of Community Design and Development*

*I think about my experience in South Africa every single day. Before the trip, my “community” existed in Baton Rouge, on campus, in my hometown. It was restricted to my friends, family, neighbors, and peers. Granted, I am thankful for the opportunities I have as a student here, but I had no idea how my idea of a community would be affected by the time I spent in South Africa and how from hereon out, my world would be far larger and more meaningful.*  
- Megan Harris, Student Reflection, LSU School of Architecture

*Our experience with African Encounter was extraordinary. They provided us with an outstanding framework for facilitating a meaningful higher education service learning experience abroad in a comfortable and friendly environment that was conducive for learning. We look forward to continuing our partnership with African Encounter for many years to come.*  
- Marsha Cuddeback, Director, LSU Office of Community Design and Development

January 1, 2011  
LSU in SOUTH AFRICA

We worked with African Encounter during the spring of 2010, culminating in our first 17-day service-learning program in Red Hill in August 2010. The program was facilitated by LSU’s Office of Community Design and Development (OCDD), and included students from the School of Architecture, Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture and Department of Interior Design. Students earned course credit for professional electives and/or a minor in Community Design.

For most of the program, the students lived in Noordhoek, SA and traveled to the rural township of Red Hill, where they worked at the Red Hill Preschool redesigning and rebuilding the children’s playground and outdoor teaching area. They also designed and built a portable puppet theater, renovated interior office space, and designed and installed new signage. During the same program, the students also worked with teachers and children from Children of Hope Preschool and designed and constructed a new raised-bed garden for the school, including a system for harvesting rainwater to irrigate the garden. Other activities of this program included visiting Cape Town, Robben Island, Cape Hope, Boulder’s Beach, and Stellenbosch, culminating in a safari in Pilanesberg.

We choose African Encounter to provide program support because of their experience and local knowledge, interest in community development, and long history of working with both volunteers and students from different countries. Service and support are at the forefront of their operation making the task of pre-programming planning efficient and affordable, and the experience of teaching and working on-site, effortless and invigorating.



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Plans are underway for an expanded program in June 2011. Our goal is to sustain this initiative for many years to come and this is made possible through the excellent service, planning, and assistance from African Encounter. It is challenging to provide international opportunities for students that align local need with student-learning outcomes. The ability to do this was made possible through African Encounter. Next year promises to be as great, if not better.

*Marsha R. Cuddeback.*

Marsha R. Cuddeback, AIA, LEED AP BD+C  
Director, LSU Office of Community Design and Development  
School of Architecture, Professional In Residence  
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana USA

*My trip to South Africa was one I will never forget. The most important lesson I learned while in South Africa was that a strong sense of community is very important to family happiness. I was pleasantly surprised to see how the Red Hill community truly was a community. Unlike most American communities, where your neighbors are strangers and everyone goes about their business as an individual entity, the people of Red Hill were like a family. Many community members were willing to help us with our rehabilitation efforts. It was amazing to see everyone contributing with what little supplies they had. I hope Americans can one day learn from them.*

- K. Cristina Navarro, Student Reflection, LSU Department of Interior Design