

Jobs for Montana's Graduates Students Flourish after Graduation

By Angela Rose Benson

Three previous Culbertson High School Jobs For Montana's Graduates students, now graduated young adults, are following their passions early in their adulthood by using vital tools they learned how to use from being active JMG students in their high school career. Paxton LaQua, 2014 graduate, Mariah Machart and Angela Benson, 2015 graduates, have embarked on their own journeys, but believe their success can be traced back to JMG and Jobs for America's Graduates, as both programs have helped them all reach their full potential and devise a plan for after graduation.



Benson, whom is also the author of this article, fell in love with the JMG program, not just for what she learned from being an active participant, but for how active she and her fellow students were able to be within the community. As graduation approached her senior year, the thought of leaving the town Culbertson did not sit well with her as she wanted to continue being an involved community member.

Through JMG, Benson was able to research and understand what her future would hold if she chose to follow her nearly lifelong passion for psychology. Furthering her education was just as important to her as staying close to home, so Benson applied to a private school known as California Coast University in Santa Ana, California, which just so happens to also offer online, accredited degrees in psychology.

Upon acceptance into CCU, Benson was in search of a job that would not only help her financially earn her degree, but allow her to be just as involved in the community as she was as a JMG student. Three weeks after graduation, Benson landed a job as the senior reporter for The Searchlight newspaper based out of Culbertson.

Benson continues to work full time for The Searchlight while being a full time student at CCU currently working towards earning a Bachelor of Science in Psychology,

and is driven towards earning a Master of Science in Psychology to one day work as a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor.

LaQua was enrolled with JMG at CHS and spent a majority of his senior year going back and forth between his two favorite choices: attending a University in his home state or enrolling in a school known as Youth With A Mission at the University of the Nations in Kona, Hawaii. Once he decided on YWAM, he realized that the application was just as much work, if not more, for college, but still continued on and was accepted.

After his first Outreach trip, which is the second phase of YWAM where students are able to travel to different locations around the world, LaQua decided to attend Leadership school at the University of the Nations and has recently returned from his second Outreach, however, on this second trip, he was able to lead a team. He remains at the University of the Nations in Kona and will continue to grow as a leader there. Machart spent her senior year involved with JMG, learning about YWAM through LaQua's decision making quest as well as following him in his journey. After some consideration, planning and decision-making, she packed her bag and began her journey from Culbertson to Hawaii on Oct. 1, 2015.



For the next 12 weeks after her arrival in Kona, Machart spent her days at YWAM in a school called Fire and Fragrance, along with some 120 other students. There, she was involved with the Discipleship Training School (DTS), which consisted of several lectures and trainings to prepare her for the Outreach phase of YWAM, the second phase.

Machart noted that YWAM in Kona was the largest base out of all the Universities of the Nations, which meant it was very expensive to attend. "I was nervous about finances. I thought, 'How will I pay for this?', but everything fell into place. God provided. I was never worried about payment deadlines. People gave us (students) kind donations for anything we needed. People from back home and some that I didn't even know gave to me," she said.

While in the DTS, Machart was able to experience much more than the trainings and lectures. She heard some of the best public speakers, including the founders of YWAM. Machart and her classmates were able to help with security at the Iron Man World Championships and tour the new property at the University of the Nations, as the campus is expanding.

When the time came for Outreach, Machart and her classmates gathered to watch a video that showed the 11 location options. Once the video ended, students were told that they had 24 hours to pray and pick three locations they would like to visit, according to Machart. Her top three locations she picked were Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Uganda, Africa. "I picked Uganda because I have always felt that I needed to go to Africa. That was my number one pick, I really wanted to go," she mentioned.

Once everyone's top three location picks were submitted, processing took around five days to be completed. The YWAM students were split up into teams consisting of 14 people, and they participated in a scavenger hunt with their team that would reveal who their three team leaders would be and where they would be traveling to for Outreach. Machart found that her and her 13 other teammates would be heading to Uganda, Africa for nine weeks. They departed Kona on Dec. 22, 2015.

The trip from Kona to Uganda took 52 hours of travel time. Machart flew from Kona to Seattle, Washington, which took five hours, then from Seattle to Dubai, which took 15 hours. The last leg of the journey involving an airplane took Machart and her team from Dubai to a city in Uganda, Africa called Entebbe, which was a 6 hour flight. From Entebbe, the team drove to a small village called Wakiso, which was a four hour drive.

The Uganda missions trip is the most expensive trip out of the other ten locations and is set up through an organization known as Show Mercy International, which was founded by Americans in 2004 and their motto is, "To mobilize, inspire and empower individuals all over the world to live life on purpose while reaching out in love". The area in which Machart and her team stayed at is called the Field of Dreams, owned by Show Mercy. There were several compounds for staff, team and intern housing, as well as a clinic and an ark where meals, meetings, worship and games were held. There were five

acres of space as well, and Show Mercy plans to expand in the future. The entire area is gated and fenced in, complete with security guards at all times and four German shepherd guard dogs.

Machart witnessed what life was like for Uganda's residents first hand. She mentioned that their only water source was rain, or Show Mercy would bring water to them. For food, they would grow crops, and for income purposes, they would grow natural plants and sell them to the market. If it doesn't rain, the crops will not grow; if the ground is not rich in nutrients, the crops will not grow. "Everyone had to live off Jesus, and they did," she stated.

Some of the children in Uganda wore the same clothes every day for the whole nine weeks Machart was there. Some families were able to have only one meal a week. "Those children were never full," said Machart. When meals were served at the ark, children would always take some home in little containers, for their families or for themselves.

"Being in Uganda and seeing how they live life there is different than how it is shown on the media. It's almost worse, but it's almost better," Machart recalled. For fun, the children would build toy cars out of plastic pop bottles and roll tires down the roads with sticks off of trees. "They appreciated things that mean nothing to Americans. I brought a forty-eight pound suitcase there, and I thought I was living small, like I didn't bring much, but I had more in my suitcase than four or five families had put together."

Machart and her teammates' main purpose in Uganda was to help the residents rely on Jesus and make their lives better with their resources and location circumstances. They promoted the Show Mercy Sponsorship, which

is where anyone can sponsor a child or an elderly individual. When sponsoring a child, it is not necessarily an adoption, it is more of a way to help parents and caregivers have the means to teach them how to live and take care of the child. There are about 200 children and 30 elderly people from Uganda in the sponsorship program.



If someone sponsored a child, it would cost \$35 a month. This would provide that child with a mattress to sleep on, one meal a week, lessons and singing songs of worship, school fees and needed school supplies and shoes when possible. Most of the schools in the area are boarding schools, so students would need to bring their own supplies, according to Machart.

If someone sponsored a senior individual in Uganda, the cost would be \$35 a month as well. This helps provide them with food, water, glasses if needed, medicine and any needed medical procedures. Machart noted that the elderly would have to travel to a larger medical facility for some things, so the sponsorship would help get them to where they need to be, as well as help pay for the medical expenses.

If anyone is interested in sponsoring a child or a senior in Uganda, you can visit Show Mercy's Sponsorship website to learn more about it and sign up at showmercy.org/smi/sponsorship-faq. If you'd like to sponsor a child, the link is showmercy.org/smi/orphan-care.

"The sponsorship covers the basics to survive. Sponsored children can even see who their sponsor is because the YWAM students can show them. There's also the mail option to contact the child you sponsor, but mail is slow in Uganda. The letters have a ways to travel, but you could get two or three a year," Machart shared.

Machart and her family are currently sponsoring two children: a boy and a girl who are brother and sister. The Macharts sent them a Christmas card, and the two children were so thankful that they approached Machart and bowed down in front of her.

"Even though they are very young in age, these kids understood what we all gave up to go help and be with them. They knew we left our friends and our families. They knew it cost us a lot of money. They were so thankful and appreciative that it made everything worth it. I learned more from them than what I taught," she said.

Show Mercy also hosts special fundraisers from time to time. The most recent fundraiser was for an Easter meal. Machart saw pictures of the residents in Uganda at this meal, so it is confirmed to have been a success. For a Christmas present, funds were raised to take the children to an amusement park, where tickets were \$2 in American dollars. A meal was also provided. Machart was able to go with the children on this adventure.

The goodbyes were hard, but Machart had to travel back to Kona on Feb. 28. Macharts family traveled to Kona for graduation, and they were reunited with her on Wednesday, March 9. She graduated from the University of the Nations on Friday, March 11.

Machart raised \$12,000 throughout her entire career at YWAM, which provided the means for tuition and Outreach fees. She returned back to her home in Culbertson on Wednesday, March 16.

Machart has been asked by several area churches to speak at youth groups and share her experience, and also discuss sponsorship. She plans to enroll at the University of North Dakota in Bismarck and major in occupational therapy.