

Brewster teen helps construct orphanage in Tanzania

By Eric Gross
Staff Reporter

Southeast - Bryan Gallagher has experienced a summer he will never forget.

The 2008 graduate of Brewster High School, who leaves next week for his freshman year at the University of Rhode Island, traveled to Tanzania where for three weeks he helped to create better lives for children by becoming a member of the TACODA project.

Gallagher, 18, explained that TACODA, or Tanzanian Community Development Alliance, was a "non-governmental body (NGO) dependent on the generosity of those willing to participate.

interacted with the children of a tiny village called Arusha while working with young adults to construct a children's home.

"Without doubt, this was one of the most memorable experiences of my entire life. Being able to help people who have nothing and knowing that your time and interest will have a lasting impact on the entire community is remarkable," he said.

Gallagher talked about the many orphans. "The children were all respectful. They were caring and had an eagerness to learn. We learned that the situation for children in sub-Saharan Africa is dire since every 14 seconds a child becomes an orphan and one out of every



Bryan Gallagher spent three weeks in Tanzania this summer volunteering at TACODA Children's Home. One of the tasks he most enjoyed was working with the orphans.



Brian Gallagher (third from left, back row) worked side-by-side with Tanzanian natives to renovate the new TACODA orphanage this summer.

In association with the not-for-profit Jim Arden Foundation, based in Connecticut, TACODA welcomed volunteers from around the globe who contributed a variety of skills to improve the lives of children in need.

During his stay, Gallagher

six children die before the age of five," he explained.

Gallagher said the statistics are even more upsetting when he learned that only 50 percent of all children finish second grade and more than 2.5 million boys and girls are homeless, orphaned by disease or

abandoned by their parents because of poverty.

"The children sleep on the streets and eat garbage to survive. The poverty we observed was gut-wrenching, but after the initial impact we found that the children were warm and welcoming and took great pride and joy in living life despite the conditions under which they live," said Gallagher.

During his 21-day stay, Gallagher worked side-by-side with Tanzanian natives as well as several young men from

Connecticut and another teen from Arusha on the construction of the new orphanage.

Gallagher was asked about the food provided during his trip.

"Different!" was the quick reply.

Gallagher said rice and beans were served at every meal.

"At the orphanage, the children were offered a

variety of food and since we ate at the orphanage each evening, we dined with our hosts which allowed us to get to know them even better," he said.

Gallagher encouraged others to volunteer with TACODA.

"The children we are helping are curious about the world and are eager to learn. My three weeks overseas were well spent since our work is making a dream become reality," he said.

Those desiring to assist financially may send a tax-deductible contribution to the Jim Arden Foundation, P.O. Box Four, Cos Cob, Conn. 06807.