

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Philippines 



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The Gift of Music

"Because music can bring people together".



Being a care volunteer in the Philippines was indeed an amazing experience for Tessa. Placed in Dakit Elementary School, she enjoyed helping the teachers with their daily activities.

She found joy being with the children at her placement and she spent her days trying to make them feel happy and valued.

"I try to give them love as I want them to feel that they are loved by someone," she said. "Some children in my class have bad home situations but they still come to school every day and they are very happy. I want to show them that they are loved," she added.

She played a lot of games with them during break time. On top of that, she thought of something to give them that would enrich their lives - the gift of music. For Tessa, music can make people happy so she wanted to introduce a musical element into her teaching. Together, they sang a lot of songs, played guitar and danced as it was clear that the children enjoyed the music a great deal. She, therefore, also decided to raise money to buy instruments for the school.

Tessa was over the moon that she was able to offer something that her placement would cherish forever. Last month, she presented the school with the musical instruments and was overjoyed to see the children's happy faces.

"You can see on the faces of the children that they are very happy to make music with the instruments and that was my goal. I think music can bring people together and that is exactly what happened between the children and me." ☺



Tessa van Huizen

Teaching Volunteer, Netherlands

Dental Care Outreach

For a more beautiful smile!



As a doctor in the UK, Dr. Terry-Anne Jennet was delighted when asked if she would be interested in leading a health promotion campaign at Jovencio Nailon Masong National High school in Bogo City. In her everyday practice as a doctor, she promotes a healthy lifestyle to her patients on a one-on-one basis but she had never taught on a larger scale before.

Although apprehensive, she took up the challenge to hopefully educate and inspire young people. Over two afternoons, she had the chance to talk with the 7th and 8th grade students at the high school, of which there were 130 in total. In particular, she taught personal and dental hygiene as these were noted to be problems at the school. She also educated the students on dengue prevention.



With the help of Thea, the volunteer coordinator, Dr. Jennet delivered an interactive presentation covering the importance of a healthy diet, exercise, personal and dental hygiene, water sanitation and dengue prevention. The students responded well to the interactive components of the session and enjoyed the group activities and videos. They also performed very well on the group quiz at the end.

After the session, Projects Abroad gave each of the students a toothbrush, toothpaste and a bar of soap for their personal use. Terry felt it a privilege to have taught such enthusiastic students and she hoped that the little information she imparted will inspire them to lead a healthy lifestyle and educate others.



Dr. Terry-Anne Jennet
Medical Volunteer, UK

Volunteer Stories

The Philippines teach the value of entering a foreign country with an open mind.



Matthew Reif is a Japanese-American volunteer who came to the Philippines to have the opportunity to live and work in Cebu for three months.

He worked at the medical project, which supports the Bogo City Health Office (CHO) and Cebu District Hospital-Bogo City, formerly known as Severo Verallio Memorial Hospital. As both facilities suffer from typhoon Yolanda, and labor and supply shortages, Projects Abroad offers both institutions the help of volunteers and funding. We also offer disaster relief in the form of rebuilding schools and homes damaged in the wake of Yolanda.

At the CHO, Matt worked in the laboratory drawing blood from patients, running drug, pregnancy, and blood type tests, and assisting lab personnel. He also went to barangays with nurses and midwives to help with vaccinations. Furthermore, he worked with TB patients (taking their vitals and weight) and went on medical missions (dispensing medication and taking vitals). At the beginning, he worked on the logistical side of things and did paperwork. He was then delegated greater responsibilities, which he was happy to accept. In the hospital, he made rounds with medical technicians collecting blood work from in/out patients, assisting in the delivery room with pregnancies, and working in the ER. He found himself pleasantly busy in both facilities.

"I learned how medical care looks in a developing country as I'm only really familiar with the American system," he said. "It's really an eye-opening experience to see a system where medications, technologies, funding, supplies and skilled staff are considered luxuries when they are what you'd just take for granted at home. I knew that medical care in the developing world wasn't like it was at home but my experiences in Bogo made me see just how stark those differences were," he added.

Matt felt satisfied that he had made a difference as he was able to make himself useful in the medical system of a foreign country. The cultural differences were evident both in his work and after hours with his host family and other volunteers. "The people here are warm, friendly and welcoming wherever you go, and that made approaching them very easy even with the language barriers. As for my future endeavors, my time in the Philippines taught me the value of entering any foreign situation with an open mind," he said.

As for Matt, he can't really pinpoint a defining experience of his time in the Philippines but he'd rather argue that everything that happened made the experience memorable. He loved the warm atmosphere and welcoming nature of the Filipino people whom he met. At first, he was worried that people would be apprehensive or distant as he was a foreigner but the reception he received was quite the opposite. His host family welcomed him into their home as if he was one of their own, saying on the night of his arrival "you are one of our family now".



Matt's advice for future volunteers is to "come with an open mind, without even the slightest preconception of what awaits you. Trust me, it's far more rewarding that way"! ☺

Matt Reif
Medical Volunteer, USA

Kort verslag van mijn verblijf in de Filipijnen van juni tot September 2014



Deze zomer ging ik voor 12 weken naar de Filipijnen. Dit omdat ik graag mijn kennis en kunde wilde proberen in een ander land en om ook gelijk te weten hoe het is om een tijd in een heel andere cultuur te zijn. Het is al langer mijn verlangen iets in het buitenland te doen, maar het was nog nooit zo duidelijk voor mij. Graag had ik naar het Midden Oosten gewild, maar toen de tyfoon Yolanda, in november 2013 veel in de Filipijnen verwoestte, lag de Filipijnen ook op mijn hart. Ik heb God veel gebeden en in maart dit jaar was voor mij duidelijk dat ik naar de Filipijnen moest gaan. En nu zie ik echt terug op een tijd met zeer veel ervaringen, indrukken die mij veranderd hebben en ik ga zeker anders terug naar Nederland dan dat ik er vandaan ging. Ik zou een heel erg lang verslag kunnen schrijven. Mij is gevraagd een kort verslag te schrijven, dus zodoende kan ik alleen maar een heel klein stukje van de sluier oplichten.

Trouwens, ervaringen zijn niet zo precies te beschrijven met alle gedachten, emoties en geur erbij. In Bogo City heb ik gewerkt in het ziekenhuis, in een health office en de laatste 2 weken op een school. In het ziekenhuis was ik eerst 2 weken op de afdeling. Ik hielp dan met medicatie voorbereiden en toedienen. Vervolgens was ik veel te vinden op de eerste hulp, in het laboratorium, op de deliver-afdeling (hier bevallen moeders van hun baby) en verder was ik regelmatig bij de tandarts en op de afdeling waar de patiënten van buitenaf behandeld werden. Mijn eerste idee was om er te werken als verpleegkundige zoals ik in Nederland doe, maar dat heb ik al snel van me af moeten zetten omdat dat niet mogelijk is gezien de taal en cultuurverschillen. De meeste patiënten spreken niet of nauwelijks Engels. Ook is het idee van werken zo anders dan ik gewend ben. Hier is het vooral ook relaxen. Hier moest ik in het begin wel erg aan wennen, maar ik heb toch besloten mezelf ook hierin aan te passen. Het personeel was erg aardig en altijd bereid en zeer geduldig om mij vaardigheden te laten doen.

In de health office gingen we een keer per week uit voor een Medical Outreach. Dit deden we in een Barangay, dat is een gedeelte van de stad waar een soort van wijkgebouw is. Dit werd vanuit de overheid verstrekt en is dus gratis voor de inwoners. Zo ook immunisatieprogramma's. Verder waren de maandag en donderdag in de health office voor de rabiësvaccinaties. Ook waren er regelmatig consultatiedagen zoals voor kinderen of zwangere vrouwen. Ook daar waren regelmatig bevallingen.

Mijn laatste 2 weken deed ik het sociale project. Ik was op een kindergarden. De klas bestaat uit 65 kinderen die zijn gesplitst in een ochtend en middag groep. Elk van 2,5 uur. De kids zijn zo rond de 5 jaar en leren letters en cijfers. Mijn taak was dan veel kleur, knip- en plakwerk en het huiswerk van de kinderen nakijken. Natuurlijk was er ook ruimte en tijd om te spelen. Deze 12 weken verbleef ik in een gastgezin. Ik voelde me zeer warm welkom telkens weer en er werd zo goed voor mij gezorgd. 3 maaltijden per dag, altijd rijst, wat ik erg lekker vind! Ook werd mijn was gedaan. En ik genoot ervan om thuis te komen na het werken. In de buurt wonen veel kinderen, die altijd wel wilden spelen.

De tijd in de Filipijnen gaf mij ook de mogelijkheid om mijn sponsorkind te bezoeken. Zij woont dichtbij Manilla. Ook ben ik een weekend naar Singapore geweest om vrienden uit Holland daar te bezoeken. Tijdens deze periode heb ik me aangesloten bij een presbyteriaanse gemeente. Wat voor mij echt een zeer grote bemoediging is geweest. Iedere zondag was er kerk, dinsdags Bijbelstudie en vrijdags prayermeeting.

De staff van Projects Abroad was altijd bereikbaar. Ze voelden zich verantwoordelijk voor mijn/onze veiligheid en welzijn en er was altijd ruimte om meer mogelijkheden te bespreken. Ook het optrekken met de andere vrijwilligers heb ik als ontspannen ervaren.



Het was voor mij een waardevolle ervaring om met de Filipijnse cultuur op te trekken. Ik heb geleerd nog meer tevreden te zijn met alles wat ik heb. Blijdschap zit niet in geld, maar vooral in tevredenheid. Echt alle mensen waren gelukkig zag ik, elke dag weer. Vooral kinderen waren ook erg gelukkig met kleine dingen zoals een sticker of ballon. Verder is mijn leven in Nederland zoveel meer stressvol.

Het voelt hier voor mij als een grote familie. Ik ga dit land dan ook met pijn in mijn hart verlaten. Ik dank God voor deze ervaring en bid of Hij Zijn Koninkrijk ook in het hart van deze mensen wil geven.

Marieke Moens (Medical and Care Volunteer, Netherlands)

Editorial

We grow by giving.



Hi folks! Time flies by so fast and we can now say hello to the “ber” months! As I’m sure you’re all too aware, in November last year, typhoon Yolanda hit the Philippines. The massive destruction incurred by that super typhoon was indeed a nightmare. Houses, hospitals, public and private infrastructure were destroyed yet people never lost hope. We would like to extend a massive thank you to our Projects Abroad volunteers who, in one way or another, made a big difference by rebuilding classrooms, working in the hospital and in the health center, and assisting teachers in schools.

It has been five months now since I started working for Projects Abroad. So far, I have enjoyed being the communications officer for the Philippines. Making friends with volunteers from all backgrounds is simply wonderful. I have learned so much from my team here and, of course, from the volunteers as well. It has broadened my idea of cultural exchange and the value of humanity.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our contributors, Marieke, Tessa, Matt and Dr. Terry-Anne, for their inspiring stories in this month’s newsletter. To all of our volunteers, we cannot thank you enough for your efforts in completing another project. Thanks to your hard work, Banban Elementary School and the Jovencio Nailon Masong National High School have two classrooms now. This was only made possible by all of you and we will be forever thankful for that. Time is one of the most precious gifts a person could give. It is something that cannot be taken back once it is spent. You don’t just help rebuild structures but you are building lasting friendships and memories that nobody can destroy.

As the old adage goes, “people don’t take trips, trips take people.” ☺



Ludette Ruiz Cambal
Communications Officer