

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

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Volunteer Stories



It was 2:00 am when Michael Lee, an American medical volunteer arrived in the Philippines. As he exited Mactan International Airport, he was immediately hit by the Filipino humidity and heat, even though it was only dawn; he was already sweating and worried about how the day's heat would greet him. As a prospective medical student, Michael was wholly interested in gaining more experience in the medical field. He thought that gaining experience in a different country would compound on the medical experience he was seeking. Projects Abroad seemed like the perfect fit in terms of being able to truly indulge in the medical field of a different country. Being convinced by his Filipino friend, he chose the Philippines to broaden his perspective and knowledge of medicine.

The next couple of days flew by as he was introduced to Projects Abroad and its mission, his duties as a medical volunteer and his host family. Within his four weeks as a medical volunteer, he had the privilege to partake and experience the healthcare system in Bogu City, meet incredible individuals from all around the world and all walks of life, travel to some very beautiful beaches, immerse himself in the Filipino culture and have freedom to execute community projects on his own will.

Why did he came to volunteer? Well, Michael came to the Philippines to learn about the medical system and gain practical experience. His four weeks in Cebu Provincial Hospital-Bogu City, rotated in the ER, lab and delivery room. As he progressed his time in the hospital, he was able to shadow doctors, nurses and lab technicians. "The great kindness and willingness that the staff provided to explain procedures was beyond insightful", he said. Observing procedures that were as simple as IV insertion and skin tests, to more complex procedures such as tubal ligation surgeries and cyst removals were fascinating to him. "A memorable experience was helping deliver babies, which at first shocking but ended in a crescendo of happiness and awe. Shadowing all the hospital staff members was fantastic, but I believe seeing the difference in dynamics between American healthcare and Filipino healthcare was even more eye-opening", he said.

Michael's biggest worries when coming to the Philippines was the people he would meet and the opportunities he would get to be able to meet them, but those worries evaporated with the social activities organized by Projects Abroad organizers, making it so much easier to meet people whether it was playing charades at the local pizza parlor or watching traditional Filipino dances. These events brought all the Projects Abroad volunteers together. After the day's work, he got the chance to meet other volunteers and go out to the infamous BBQ plaza to chill.



The three weekends he had, he explored Cebu City, Camotes Island and Bantayan Island. For Michael, exploring Camotes Island and Bantayan Island was the most memorable in terms of traveling. With a tough week in the hospital, exploring the islands was exactly what the doctor ordered. While on the island, he got to see white sand accompanied with clear blue waters that was just breathtaking! Explore the island's caves, snorkeling and relaxing on the beach with friends are things he craved to do again.

Upon understanding the culture, Michael believes that eating local cuisine is one of the best ways to learn about another culture. "My host's family's assortment of food that they laid out for me during breakfast and dinner and the packed lunch they gave me was always the highlight of my day", he said.

One of the most rewarding experiences during his stay in Bogu City was preparing a Responsible Adolescent Health and Sexuality Campaign talk with one of the local high schools with another volunteer, Sunny, who was a doctor from London. They presented their knowledge and created a presentation to educate the local student population about basic reproductive anatomy, STD's and safe sex. "I was very appreciative of the Projects Abroad staff for supporting and helping us set up this great talk. It just underscored the true freedom we receive as volunteers to help the community," he said.



"I am truly thankful that I had the chance to be part of such a great program that is Projects Abroad. Beyond the medical knowledge I attained, I became more culturally competent, gained many friends, and made memories that will last a lifetime. I hope that my next experience volunteering abroad can match up to the time I had through Projects Abroad", he added.

Real Joy At Work



My name is Ellie and I am from the UK. I came to the Philippines for two weeks to volunteer on one of their care project. My project took place in a kindergarten class where I would assist the teacher with her lessons.

It was a real joy to work in a place where everybody greets you with a smile and so full of happy children, excited to take part in their lessons. I have learnt that a pencil mustache is funny in any country and that singing with actions will always draw a crowd.

I feel that I will return to the UK as a more family oriented person, because living with a family who are very close to one another has made me see family time as important. This experience has also helped me to develop my confidence in meeting new people and living with a host family.

I am looking forward to learning more about childcare at university and this experience has really got me excited about my future career working with children. I will always remember the lunchtime sing-songs with the school children; I found it easier to bond with the children through actions and songs rather than just talking. I will definitely miss those times most of all.



Eleanor Sherman, Care Volunteer
United Kingdom

When It's Christmas

How do we know if it's Christmas? It's when we see series lights, big and small Christmas trees in our homes, streets, malls and everywhere. It's when we hear Christmas carols and songs of the yuletide at churches. Yes, it's Christmas but what is really the essence of Christmas? It is the season of giving. It is not just giving materials gifts but when it comes to giving or sharing it could be the "gift of time". Gifts come in various ways when it's Christmas, but what truly matters most is showing someone their importance by letting them feel they are loved, cared for and treasured and the simplest way is to make them smile in your own little way. Sometimes, it's the presence of the person that brightens someone's day. So hug a loved one today and continue to brighten someone's day! Merry Christmas! ☺



Here's our staff's Christmas message for everyone! ☺

Christmas is love in action. Every time we give, every time we share, every time we are grateful for something we have and give more of what we have, it's Christmas. –**Kristhea**

An English proverb says, "A joy that's shared is a joy made double. As we say in Cebuano, "hatag-hatagay; bahin-bahinay (sharing)". Christmas is all about the joys and the wonderful things in sharing. –**Aquilles**

Christmas is a joy and happiness. It's time for sharing and giving. As the saying goes, "It's time to love your enemy". –**Ethel**

Keep the spirit of the Season in your heart all year long!
– **Kenneth**



Basket of Joy

