

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Vietnam



WHAT'S INSIDE?

- 01 Travel Volunteer Story
- 02 Medical Volunteer Story
- 03 2-Week-Special 2014 Journal
- 04 August Outreach Event
- 05 September Calendar

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TRAVEL VOLUNTEER STORIES

A weekend trip to Perfume Pagoda



Last weekend my colleagues, the teachers of the English department at Yen Hoa Secondary, took us (fellow volunteers Laura, Rachel and I) to the Perfume Pagoda, a vast complex of Buddhist temples and shrines built into the limestone Huong Tich Mountains.

We started the day by sharing a typical Vietnamese breakfast: the Pho, soup consisting of broth, rice noodles, a few herbs, and meat. This is one of the best things I have ever eaten in the morning, and it provides you with natural starches, proteins and vitamins.

We then drove to Ninh Binh, to visit the numerous temples. I saw many Buddhist temples when I was in Bali eight years ago, but this is always an experience. There were statues of monks who had reached illumination and statues of Buddha made of bronze and plated with gold around which the temples were built.

Apparently a lot of families and students visit the pagoda this time of year, for the most important exam in Vietnam (an equivalent for the American SATs) takes place in the first days of July.

We shared a very friendly lunch around 12, after which I lived an experience that was just as mesmerizing as the trekking in Sa Pa: a boat ride along the On Yen River, punctuated by visits of shrines and crossings of caves.

For dinner, we went to a restaurant where they serve goat meat. I found it similar to lamb, but with a “milky” after-taste.

I wish to thank Mrs Tam and my colleagues for this beautiful journey!



VOLUNTEER STORY

How a medical volunteer trip in Vietnam opened the mind of a University of Arizona student about different ways of performing medicine

Third year undergraduate student majoring in Physiology at the University of Arizona (United States), Kimberly Pham (21), will be doing her honors thesis on acupuncture and the differences between eastern and western medicine. Kimberly thought signing up for a volunteering program with Projects Abroad in Vietnam would be a good way to gain more hands-on experience in her academic field while giving back. "I wanted to help others in need and give back to the community by participating in activities that will make me more open-minded as a future health care provider."

A day at Kimberly's placement – the National Hospital of Acupuncture - started at 8am and finished at 4pm. She worked in the Paediatrics Autism Department where traditional medical practices like acupuncture and



massaging are used to treat autistic children. Kimberly assisted the local doctors and nurses with taking off and attaching the electrodes, as well as removing needles and massaging. "I think I enjoy massaging the most because the children were more relaxed and not screaming!" shared Kimberly.

"During the first week, they asked me to remove needles and put on electrodes, which was very hands-on. It was a little bit quick for me as back in the States I wouldn't have been able to do that. I thought it was nice as it helped me to adapt more effectively."



According to Kimberly, acupuncture is not very popular in western countries: "Actually, a lot of people look down on it – they much rather prefer western medicine and they prefer taking medicine rather than performing acupuncture or taking traditional medicine." This experience in Vietnam shed light on the underrated positive effects of traditional medical methods: "I heard a lot of families saying how well their children have become after the acupuncture sessions. They have been to other hospitals but they said that the contemporary medical methods couldn't help the children much. That's why I think acupuncture has worked quite well for them!" Kimberly also shared what she plans to do to develop the results of this volunteer experience: "This experience made me more interested in how acupuncture works, so I think I will do more research about it when I get home."

From Kimberly, this is a great opportunity for a pre-med student like herself to get experience in the medical field, "It opened my mind a lot to the different ways you can perform medicine, not just concentrating on what's in books. I think volunteering in a different country is really a good experience for all college students, as you are young and you can help other people and get to see other cultures, rather than just plainly travelling."

2 WEEKS SPECIAL 2014 JOURNAL



In July and August, two groups of high school students from the US, France, Belgium, Korea, Canada, Sweden, and Japan joined Projects Abroad Vietnam's 2 Week Special program in the Friendship Village, helping disabled children – the second or third generation of victims of Agent Orange during Vietnam War. Even though these young volunteers just worked at the placement for two weeks, they made significant efforts to overcome all difficulties in order to lighten up these children's lives.

The volunteers mostly assisted the teachers in special education classes teaching some basic math, instructing them on how to write, and showing them how to make some simple crafts. Sometimes they also supported the teacher in self-care and hygiene classes, instructing each child on how to brush their teeth, hair, and wash their hands. In addition, each group organized a cooking lesson, teaching the children new dishes: we made crepe and sushi this time. It was a little bit chaotic as some children were hyper-energetic but it still went well. The children really enjoyed eating their works and the teacher informed them that they did pretty well the second time.

Though the work was tough in the beginning with language as one barrier and the children's mental disability another, the volunteers always found some way to accomplish their job. To teach math, they brought along small notes that they wrote the pronunciation of the numbers one to ten on in Vietnamese. I think after two weeks, all the volunteers could at least remember how to count from one to 10 in Vietnamese. To encourage the children or

get their attention, they clapped. To show their love, they smiled and hugged. They held the children's hands to help them write letters and gave them the thumbs up when they finished their assignments. Sometimes they just simply sat with the children, seeing them draw some pictures and write some words that they could not understand.

Like what I always said to the volunteers, their two weeks of volunteering may make a little difference to the whole Village but surely means a lot to each individual child, since merely their presence there makes the children feel loved.

By Minh Trang, 2WS group coordinator



August Outreach Event: In Photos

Zoo trip for children at Anh Sao autistic kindergarten



Projects Abroad Vietnam organized this Zoo Day for 70 children at Anh Sao kindergarten for autistic children. Our volunteer team happily joined in and helped!



Together they enjoyed watching the animals!



Although it is not easy to get these children with special needs' attention and to keep them under control to have a safe and happy trip, our volunteers could bring them a lot of smiles like these ones!



WHAT'S ON: SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1 Public Holiday	2 Public Holiday Brittani, Samantha arrive	3 Michiko arrives	4 Cooking event: Moon Cake	5 New Schoolyear	6 Caroline arrives	7
8 Nina arrives	9	10	11 Loan Tran arrives Monthly Out- reach event	12	13	14
15	16 Sarah arrives	17 Medical Workshop	18 Tania arrives CARE WORKSHOP	19	20	21 World Gratitude Day
22	23 Anthony arrives	24	25	26 Ice-cream social evening	27	28
29	30					

September 4 - Cooking event: Learning to make traditional mooncakes for mid-autumn festival: A great chance for volunteers to get to know other fellow volunteers from different volunteer houses and host families while having an interesting time discovering how to make the famous mooncakes!

September 11 - Monthly Outreach event: This is the most expected event of the month when the volunteer team has the chance to contribute their enthusiasm and volunteer spirit to the local community. Stay tuned for more coming information!

September 17 - Medical Workshop

September 18 - Care Workshop.

September 26– Ice-cream social evening