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Projects Abroad Fiji “Isles of Smiles”

February 2013

Editor's Note

Bula!

February is here, the shortest month of the year. This month is also very exciting for all those hopeless romantics – Valentine's Day! It not only signifies love between a male and a female but also love for your friends and family. Love is what makes the world go round. It is with this love that our volunteers have travelled such a long way to help out in our schools and communities to better them.

We are grateful for their assistance in all their respective fields and wish them well as they finish their projects and head for home. We've had memorable moments with everyone, especially celebrating birthdays and major events together. We never have a dull moment because there is always so much going on around us.

We've only just sorted out a new Community Project that looks like it will be a big hit with future volunteers. The new site is located right next to one of the most beautiful beaches in Fiji, called Deuba. It is a haven for amazing marine life and because the ocean is our heritage, it is our duty to take care of it for the future generations. With help from all our volunteers, this will be possible. I wish everyone all the best for the coming months and I look forward to making friends and lasting bonds. 2013 is definitely looking up for Projects Abroad Fiji.

“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing” - Helen Keller

Vinaka

Michelle Ali

Information Coordinator

Projects Abroad Fiji





Mitieli Savu—our new Community Project Coordinator.

Welcome Mitieli Savu!

Bula!

My name is Mitieli Savu (but you can call me Miti) and I'm from the lovely Fiji Islands. Prior to joining Projects Abroad Fiji, I was attached with the STOP (Sports Training Outreach Program) HIV Program for three years as a member of the STOP HIV Champions. With this program, I had to facilitate outreach programs with all the selected District, National and International Sporting Events that were held in Fiji. A few events

that I took part in were the Coca Cola Games (2009/2010/2011), Fiji Netball Inter District Championships (2009/2010), Fiji Inter District Soccer Championships (2009/2010), and Fiji International Rugby Tournament (2009). Apart from being an advocate to these sporting functions, we also had presentations to the organizations on how they could become better sports people and protect them from HIV—using sports as the main mode for transmitting information.

Working with STOP HIV, I also had the privilege to do media relations work, create presentations and also partake in discussions with various group activities. I was made aware of the different ethnicities, religions, sexuality and personal views. Having being introduced to other NGO's such as UNAIDS and UNIFEM, it made me aware of how important their roles are towards promoting healthy living, and improving the standard of living in Fiji as a whole.

“Volunteers are good ambassadors for the youths, helping us create a better Fiji for tomorrow”

With experience gained from all the above, I moved on to become an assistant teacher in a few schools under the Grant-In-Aid Scheme. I was able to take on the challenges faced through the schools and other issues concerning the youths in the promotion of well-being in our society.

that with time, and services as volunteers and good ambassadors for the youths, we can create a better Fiji for tomorrow.

Moce-mada (bye for now) xx

It is indeed challenging to work as a volunteer and to counter all these aspects of life but I do strongly believe



From Belgium with Love—Fleur Bijmens

Eighteen-year-old Fleur Bijmens travelled to Fiji to volunteer through Projects Abroad at their Care Project based in the West end of the island, mainly Nadi. She spent her time teaching at the summer school and over the weekends she explored and travelled with other volunteers to off-shore resorts. Upon arriving in Fiji, the first thing that welcomed Fleur was the mind-blowing friendliness of the Fijian people and how quickly they accepted her into their

homes and community. At first, the experience of teaching was slightly daunting as the teacher to student ratio was nothing like what she was used to back home in Belgium. “The education system is not at all like my home and that is why I really believe that volunteers are needed more than ever at schools in Fiji. Projects Abroad gives people from all over the world the opportunity to help teach according to overseas standards.” Fleur’s daily tasks included

taking care of the children, motivating and teaching them. In summer school, the volunteers would have a lot of responsibility as they had to set up their own teaching programme for the day as there were no teachers available. This gave them instant responsibility and made the teachers and the school board appreciate the work all the volunteers were doing. Fleur got used to having busy days at school as she taught the children English and maths, and for some variance, she



added in songs, games and basic knowledge about Europe. As a volunteer, Fleur learnt to be responsible for an entire class and at the same time, discipline them without inflicting fear. She believes that more help is needed in the village schools as the children in the cities were open to Western influences such as social media. Culturally, Fleur found that the children were more susceptible to music and rhythm and were

very good in that aspect. Fleur’s most memorable experience was when she had to show discipline and compassion at the same time. “Some students were bullying this girl and she wanted to go home. I ran after her, talked her out of leaving and helped her get back to class.” Her advice to future volunteers would be to prepare well as every day is a surprise and if you’re here to teach, a set

game plan is very important. The vast differences between Belgian and Fijian education are many, but the children are so artistic and they show so much love and appreciation to the volunteers. Fleur adds, “At the end of the day, you are much more than just ‘a teacher’.” We hope this inspiring story encourages others to help Projects Abroad

“Projects Abroad gives people from all over the world the opportunity to help teach according to overseas stan-

continue to make a difference, and by doing so, learn something themselves along the way.



Project Updates

Care—Suva

Flavia Zimmermann (Swiss) & Audun Lorentzen (Norwegian) – Dilkusha Methodist Kindy

These two volunteers have adapted really well with the new enrolments at Kindy. At first they were over-whelmed by the behaviour of new kids and parents being present at Kindy for the first week. However, they both have quickly adapted to the Fijian kindergarten curriculum. They are proactive and their supervisor is very pleased with their performance. Audun and Flavia will be working on music classes. Audun has brought his trumpet from home and has asked the supervisor for a guitar so both of them can organise music classes.

Sarina Hackl & Lisa Schaeftner (German) – Bainivalu Kindergarten & Primary School

Sarina and Lisa had been over-whelmed with their placement as they started during the first week of school. However, the two have used the workshop and talanoa sessions to help them adapt to their placement. The two have used the materials provided at the workshop and internet to help them at the school. The volunteers are very happy at the kindergarten; however, the girls are not very participatory in school for the first graders. Nevertheless, after visiting them and discussing some tips for them to participate, they were encouraged and participated in the class.

Marita Nimmons (Norwegian) – Little Angels Kindergarten & Samabula Primary

Marita has been loved by both placements where she does half day sessions. Marita had been great help in identifying an autistic child and helping him communicate in the class with the cards she made for him. He was later enrolled by his parents (who then realised that he needed special attention) to a school for autistic kids. Marita's second session of the day is at Samabula Primary school in Grade 1. She fits in well with the structured curriculum for the class and dedicates one hour to teaching English to two Korean girls during the vernacular class. Marita has shown great enthusiasm as a Care volunteer and will be deeply missed by both her placements.

Teaching— Suva

Valerie Burkhardt (Germany) – St. Joseph the Worker Primary School

Overall, Valerie has been doing an excellent job with her class. She is given freedom over the class and the schedules. She is teaching her class nouns at the moment and they are responding very well. Developing the weaker students has been her top-most priority at this stage and things are looking very well.

Jan-Willem Verstraten (The Netherlands) – Rishikul Primary School

Jan has just completed his project with us. He has been a very pro-active volunteer and has advised everyone to start the day with energy-filled games that include mathematics so the children get excited about the lessons for the day. He uses this method to retain attention of the students. Jan's contribution has been very well-received by the school and the staff of Projects Abroad. He is now finishing off his studies in Australia before he flies to Europe.

Community project— Suva

We have just managed to secure a new Community Project. The new location is in Galoa, which is about a 40-minute drive from the city. It is a very scenic village situated right by an amazing beach. We have also confirmed that as part of our social, we will be doing a beach clean-up campaign followed by a picnic lunch and swimming. The lovely villagers have also offered to take us on a boat trip. Things are looking very exciting for the new project.

Project Updates - Nadi

COMMUNITY PROJECT: Hannah Gabsch

Hannah, who is from Australia, is only here for a month. This is her third week at her placement at Vunayasi District School and she lives in Dratabu Village. Hannah, who is humble with a very soft voice preferred to assist in the upper class as the students responded well to her. She is the first IT teacher at the school and she is continuing with the project implemented by a former volunteer Andrew Pope. She has six students under her tutelage and is really enjoying her time with the kids. She also helped out with the school administration and English teaching. In the afternoon she does material tie-dye with her host mum, something to take back home as a souvenir.

TEACHING: Connor Morgan

Connor Morgan is from Australia and is completing his degree in teaching and he is happy to have his own class at Nadi District School. He is teaching class seven with 40 students. Oliver Rickll is helping him with the class. They teach English, maths, science, music and sports. It is a big challenge for him at Nadi District school as

Project Updates

things are always subject to changes every day. One thing he learnt a lot was to be very patient with his students and be prepared. He found out that some of the topics the students are studying are more advanced.

TEACHING: Elizabeth Jackson

Elizabeth is from Prague and is helping out at Arya Samaj Primary School. She is in the process of helping out with refurbishing the school library with colourful paints and library books. The library was untouched for two years. With the help of school prefects and volunteer Hannah Stacey they started the painting towards mid-January. She will be in Nadi Arya Samaj for five months. She wishes to complete the school library and teach the students how to use the library and at the same time, fill in as a substitute teacher.

CARE: Nora Shetelig /Katarina Hillestad

Nora and Katarina are great friends and have traveled together from Norway. They are both enjoying themselves at Nadi Muslim Kindergarten. As it is a big difference from home, it also is a big challenge for them to help in the kindergarten as most students speak very little English. It is also the beginning of school year and there is a lot of crying as students are going through separation time from their loved ones at home. The volunteers are doing a great job with the children and ensuring that the children are distracted by interactive games and songs. Overall, all the volunteers are doing such excellent work at their placements.



Photos Galore!



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