

My experience in the Philippines...

Service, Service, Service!!!! The whole two years at Kenvale College has been learning about “service” in the tourism and hospitality industry, taking care of customers, creating a service culture in the workplace, etc. During the first two weeks of January 2007, it has all come to life in the most different context: in the small but beautiful island of the Philippines: Iloilo.



Together with 23 Aussie students and young professionals, I ventured on a service project to the Philippines. Our first task was to impart a short computer course to teachers at a National High School. We taught them how to use Microsoft Word, Excel and

Powerpoint. The teachers were at different levels of computer literacy, so we taught each group according to their level. One of them commented, *“No one has ever taken the time to go through these things with me before, the computers are there, but we don't know how to use them! Thank you very much, now I can explore and keep going on my own”*.

After that, we had construction work in two different villages or “barangays”. In one, we built two public toilets and a deep well connected to a pump, to provide clean water for the people. In the other barangay we constructed eight cement footpaths which will prevent floods in the main areas of the neighbourhood. We also cemented the floor and built a wall around a Child Day Care Centre to shelter it when it rains.

We also taught a Health Promoters Course to the ladies of both barangays. In a very interactive way we talked about their problems with water, hygiene, diseases and nutrition. One participant said, *“It is very rewarding for us to have you as visitors to come to teach us*



something about how to improve our life style. Even though we are poor, we can always improve. Thank you very much.”

Visiting their homes was a moving experience. We could see the poor conditions in which they live and it really helped to realise how lucky we are. Despite all their difficulties, they were always very welcoming; their simplicity and cheerfulness made us feel at home.

On the weekend we participated in a Free Clinic Day for a deaf prevention program where many people had their ears cleaned by two doctors who gave their time to be with them for free. It was very helpful for the people as they do not have the resources to go to the doctor regularly or can't afford basic medical services.

Finally, one of the most impressive experiences was our visit to a public hospital. We could see the numerous material needs the hospital has. We encountered the suffering of entire families when small illnesses become much more complicated when they cannot afford an operation. Their cheerful smile, faith, and optimism in the middle of the worst circumstances are what we got back.



We were also able to go around the city and experience the Filipino culture. “Karaoke” was the favourite of every one in the shopping centres even the employees; “Jeepneys” are definitely the best way to travel: no doors, no windows and loud music; the beaches were beautiful with endless landscapes; and of course the Filipino sweets and “ube” ice cream was our favourite!

The service attitude on a project like this was certainly lived 24/7... even with each other. This is what made the trip so fun and enjoyable... and it will have an impact in the way we live our lives from now on...and our friendships will last!

- Eugenia Lopez

KC Graduate, Class '06