



April 2013

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My volunteer experience at Green Pine Clinic



I recently returned from a month long (as everyone says, not long enough) volunteer placement in Vietnam. I actually knew very little about my placement before arriving in Hanoi despite my efforts to discover more. This turned out to be because I was the first volunteer to be placed in the Green Pine Clinic which had yet to open.

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FEATURE STORY

My volunteer experience at Green Pine Clinic

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The Green Pine Clinic comes under the auspices of R.T.C.C.D. (Research and Training Centre for Community Development) and is being established to assess the growth and development of children in Vietnam. At this early stage the focus will be on children from birth to six-years but these ages will be expanded in the future. There will also be provision for antenatal education, individual counseling for families and parent information sessions. The overall emphasis is on health education and preventative care. The clinic is to be the first of its kind in Vietnam. Green Pine clinic officially opens on the 1st of June, 2013.

As a Maternal and Child Health Nurse in Australia, I was familiar with assessing growth and development in children but was initially unsure of what role I was to play in my placement. However, I was surrounded by a dedicated team who were all totally committed to the purpose of the clinic and wished to make use of any knowledge I could give them. I spent the mornings presenting on a specific age and stage. In the afternoon we did a practical session on a “pilot” child followed by a general discussion. Each session always went longer than planned due to the time needed for interpreting. The days were busy but it was very exciting to be involved so early in such an ambitious project.



The staff throughout the whole of the R.T.C.C.D building were warm, friendly and helpful and went out of their way to make me feel comfortable. In particular, I feel very attached to those that will take Green Pine Clinic forward and hope to maintain the strong links I have made with them.

Overall, every aspect of my time spent in Hanoi through Projects Abroad exceeded my expectations. From the wonderful housemates I had in House 3 to the challenging work experience; this month, will always be remembered

as a special time in my life. I would recommend the volunteering experience to anyone!

Diane Silk, Care volunteer, Australia

VOLUNTEER CORNER

What I did during my amazing 2 weeks in Hanoi

I have just finished my two weeks of volunteering in Vietnam at the Bo De Pagoda. What an amazing experience and one I will never forget. I have met some fantastic people which I'm hoping I will keep in touch with.

I went to Vietnam with the mindset of making the most of the two weeks and my main focus was to support and help the kindergarten teacher, not only with the day to day routine of the room but also the supervision of the children. I was informed previously that the kindergarten hadn't been open for long and that help was needed to develop the programme and to build up resources. With this in mind I asked the families where I work if they would like to donate basic craft, clothing or hygiene items to be used in the kindergarten. I had an abundance of pencils, textas, crayons, glue sticks, as well as books and clothing, toothbrushes, soap and face washers. I packed the stationery into individual plastic containers which could be stacked into a small storage cupboard



(also encouraging the organisation of supplies). The items were a perfect basis for building up the supplies.

The toys for the children were very limited (not much and broken) so the children would create their own simple games and play areas from what was available. During our three hour break, which was lunch and rest time for the children, we would often go shopping; so I purchased some basic fit together blocks and more books. Also coloured plastic cups – one for each child. I spent the first few days observing what would be the most beneficial for the children. The second week was a good chance to offer some experiences to the children, my work colleague at home had made some small booklets with pictures of Australian animals to colour in and I also did a pasting activity using coloured shapes on white paper. I felt this was appropriate for the ages of the children, reinforcing shape and color.



Each morning we washed the children's feet, hands and faces – also applying cream to their skin. I loved this time, as the children enjoyed the one on one attention we were giving them. I didn't expect to make a huge difference in two weeks but I tried to pre-plan what I took over, tried to be organised and focused on what my job description entailed and also have a few ideas up my sleeve. I felt that I helped and supported the teacher and that I offered the children a number of special, positive moments each day during my stay and that makes me happy.

Thank you to Projects Abroad!

Jean Richards, Care volunteer, UK

VOLUNTEER CORNER

My first week in Hanoi

Wow what a week!

I was warmly welcomed to Vietnam by Thao who picked me up at the airport after my flights all the way from Australia. The first shock I got was that the cars are driven on the left side and we travel on the right hand side of the road in Vietnam. Something I'm definitely not used to! It was a chance for me to have a good look at the city of Hanoi. I was amazed to see all kinds of things being carried by motorbike. Even sheets of corrugated iron and metres of pipe!



Walking to the house for the first time was quite daunting as we seemed to be following a maze of lanes and alleys, I was sure that I would never find my way out again! Alice and Cora were home when I arrived and I instantly felt a part of the family. I was able to then settle in and even managed to sneak in a little nap. That night when I went to bed, I got to listen to the neighbours' karaoke efforts, I was not used to the noise outside and all around, but you learn to tune it out pretty quickly.

For my introduction to the city of Hanoi, I first had a quick lesson in Vietnamese and soon learned that my pronunciation is terrible! However, 'xin chao' and 'cam on' have proved to be essential phrases that help when talking to the locals. We had a delicious lunch in the Old Quarter which allowed me to try some new flavours.

When I came home, I met Tuyet, our cook. She was making a favourite of mine, spring rolls! She was kind enough to let me help her do some rolling. I must say that the food provided to us in the house is always mouth-watering. I look forward to seeing what she has cooked us every day when I get home from work.



Emma and little volunteer Lena are preparing the filling of Vietnamese springrolls on the Cooking Day for Bo De placement

VOLUNTEER CORNER

My first week in Hanoi

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After visiting my school, I prepared for my first day. Travelling by bus was really easy but be prepared to be the centre of attention as there are not many westerners that travel by bus. On my way to work one day, a lovely older lady motioned for me to sit next to her. After sitting down I greeted her and she proceeded to spend the trip touching my face and skin, she was just very curious about my pale skin. Certainly a new experience for me!

I also got to go and visit Bo De placement with Cora to help out for a day. It is an eye opening place. The work the volunteers do here helps the children immensely. While it is easy to feel helpless and down about the situations the children face daily, it is really important to remember that any time the children spends with you is appreciated. I was quite emotional during my first visit as the gravity of it all hit me very suddenly. However, I encourage everyone to go and visit if they have the time.



Emma and a disabled kid at Bo De pagoda

Overall, it has been a varied and diverse week with lots of new experiences. Bring on the next seven weeks!

Emma Hedges, Teaching volunteer, Australia

STAFF UPDATE

Xin chào,

Eleven days have been passing by since I started working here as a Project Coordinator for Projects Abroad Vietnam. Eleven days are not too long to say that I have got to know everything, but long enough to get to know what I am going to do, also my colleagues, volunteers...

The working environment here is very cozy and friendly. I am the new member, so everyone doesn't mind helping me with any task and answering me any wonder/question. After not long time, today looking back to what I have learned/experienced here with colleagues, volunteers, partners... I just realized that everything goes beyond my expectations before I worked here. That's also the reason why I try day by day so that I could not only train myself but also not make everyone get disappointed about me. So far, it seems that everything gets its trail.

I graduated from Hanoi Foreign Trade University with the major of Business Administration. During my spare time as a student, I was doing volunteering for some projects supporting disabled people and in-need people. And I realize that though I was studying business, I want to work in sustainable sectors like: environmental protection, human rights, education... So far, I have been experiencing working in some NGOs about those fields and hope that I can pursue the way I have been chosen. I also have got the opportunities to take part in some training courses about disabled people and how to include them in society which encourages me more to pursue this career.

Working as a Project Coordinator, there are many challenges to face like: culture conflicts, projects issues... but seeing how the volunteers enjoy their work here, how happy they are to see improvement of projects, of the kids is my happiness. And of course, "where there is a will, there is a way", this is what I always remind myself when problems come.

I wish not only for myself but also for anyone who has joined/is going to join Projects Abroad the greatest time ever.

Greetings,

Tam Nguyen - Project Coordinator

PROJECT UPDATES

Arts and craft projects are the latest projects being launched by Projects Abroad Vietnam. Registering as volunteers of these projects, you will have the chance to cultivate and boost your creativity and volunteering enthusiasm while contributing to the human well-being improvements in an interesting South East Asian developing country - Vietnam.

Projects Abroad Vietnam works with two social enterprises to build these exciting and unique projects for the arts and craft enthusiasts. If you love kids and desire to transfer your creativity and artistic value to them, the project with ToHe social enterprise is the right one for you. ToHe is a social organisation which works directly with the unlucky and disabled Vietnamese children and stimulates the ability to be creative and craft-ive inside them. The children's artworks, after being made into interesting and usable products, will be introduced to the market and sold in ToHe's showroom and various fairs in the country. All profits generated will go towards the education purpose for these children. To be ToHe's arts and craft volunteer, you are not expected to be extremely artistic or creative but to be greatly dedicated and enthusiastic about working with kids. Devising art and craft ideas,



digging into DIY websites to select interesting and suitable models, helping with composing the craft textbook, teaching English to staffs, contributing your marketing ideas and assisting with art and craft lessons at the centres for disabled kids are the major roles volunteers will take at ToHe. The organisation is a young, dynamic and creative collective in which volunteers' keenness and ideas are highly welcomed and appreciated and volunteers will have interesting opportunities to pay short trips to the outskirts of Hanoi on a frequent basis to offer art and craft lessons.

The second option is an equally interesting one which gives handicraft lovers a chance to help the poor and disabled Vietnamese ethnic artisans have their products more widely exposed to the market in sustainable ways. Volunteering in this project, you will get the guidance and support by Craft-to-Inspire (C2I) social enterprise. The organisation has been working closely with Thuan Hoa Social Protection Centre in Mai Chau, Hoa Binh – a peaceful and charming mountainous province of northern Vietnam (75km from the capital Hanoi). The various fields that volunteers can work and contribute are English teaching to the ethnic artisans, marketing and product designing. Your time can be split between working in the organisation office in Hanoi and going to the mountainous Hoa Binh to help with the disabled ethnic artisans, which is



a really great chance to work and enjoy both the city life and the natural landscape in just one volunteer project. The artisans of Thuan Hoa Social Protection Centre specializes in the traditional weaving, tailoring and embroidering, through which volunteers can approach, observe, understand and learn the handicraft skills if interested.

Duong Pham—social manager

PHOTOS OF THE MONTH



Care volunteer Nath Mai has these great smiles with kids at Bo De placement



It looks like this Vietnamese boy enjoys teaching volunteer Hilde's lesson very much



Teaching volunteer Monika has an excellent idea of teaching English through cooking lessons. The students absolutely love it!



Volunteers Cora and Paula take photo with the stuff they bought for unlucky kids at Bo De pagoda



Care volunteer Alexandra says she is really glad to be allowed to see the surgeries with the Vietnamese doctors

What's On: May 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2 Arthur arrives	3 Amanda arrives Ice-cream Evening	4
5	6	7 Amanda's birthday	8	9	10	11 Dirty Day: painting the kindergarten class at Bo De
12	13 Julia arrives	14	15	16 Monthly workshop	17	18
19	20	21	22 Samantha arrives Hildegard's birthday	23 Ian arrives	24 7.30pm Viet-namese movie screening	25
26	27	28	29	30 Children's Day—performance of Bo De kids	31 Cooking class: Vietnamese food	1 Children's Day

Mar 3— This promises to be a great chance for current and new volunteers to meet up while enjoying great icecreams at one of the best icecream places of the city—Fanny.

Address: 51 Li Thuong Kiet St.

Time: 8.00pm

Cost: 80,000-120,000VND/person

Mar 11– Are you interested in contributing your physical labour and creativity for a meaningful cause? We are going to paint the outer wall of Bo De kindergarten classroom.

Meet at: Bo De pagoda

Time: 8.00am

Mar 16 - **Monthly workshop.** More information to come!

Mar 24 – If you are keen on understanding more about Vietnam and help boost the country's cinematic works, then this event with the screening of Vietnamese movie 'Living in Fear' is an exciting one to join.

Address: 51 Tran Hung Dao St.

Time: 7.30pm

Suggested donation: 100,000VND/guest

Mar 31 - **Cooking class—Vietnamese cuisine** - More information will be updated soon on this event. Stay tuned with us :)

Contact Us

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Projects Abroad is the leading global organizer of overseas voluntary work placements. Our wide range of projects, including Teaching, Care, Conservation & Environment, Medicine & Healthcare, Sports, Culture & Community projects and Journalism, are designed specifically for the needs of the communities in which we work, whilst giving our volunteers the very best experience of volunteering abroad.

Based in Hanoi, Vietnam, volunteers can work on a variety of projects, including care work with disabled and orphaned children, physical therapy at local hospitals, and teaching either English or French in both primary and secondary schools. The latest projects to open is nursing projects at Green Pine Clinic and WECARE and Occupational Therapy project. If you are interested in volunteering in Vietnam with Projects Abroad then please log on to www.projects-abroad.net for more information.



Volunteers on the Cooking-Giving Day organized towards the unlucky children and elderly people at Bo Do placement