

You can also find us on the following social media sites:



Table of Contents

- Nausori Special School: mytrip-blog
- Volunteer Story—Karen Ngwenya
- Project updates
- Care and Teaching Project
- Community Project
- Photo Pages!



Projects Abroad Fiji “Isles of Smiles”

April 2013

Editor's Note

Bula!

The Easter break of four days was just what the doctor ordered. Four days of bliss, relaxing on a beach in paradise; four days of no technology and four days of peace and quiet. Oh well, nothing lasts forever and holidays come to an end. April has been awesome to date. We've met some great people and hosted some pretty interesting workshops in relation to Fiji and its language and people. The volunteers have been keeping busy with their projects and also pitched in to help at the paid social event at one of the schools in Suva. They managed to make a fence out of plastic bottles, all painted in pretty bright summer colours for the children to enjoy. Although it was raining on the day, it didn't stop the volunteers and the staff of Projects Abroad Fiji from taking full advantage of the indoor facilities at the school. The result of all that hard work was well worth it when you saw the children's eyes light up with excitement! It is indeed a great feeling knowing you have done something worthwhile with your time. Giving back to the community is the best way to pay your dues to society and mankind. On this note, April is also Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Month. If you have a pet or just love all animals, this is the best time to educate others on the value of all life on Earth. Pets complete your home. I have a cat at home and I cannot stand to see other animals suffer when there is something we all can do to help. Nature is part of Earth and animals are part and parcel of the whole circle. We must do what is necessary to protect the silent ones. With this said, I hope you all enjoy reading this issue and take time to reflect on the part you play on Earth.

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

Vinaka

Michelle Ali

Information Coordinator

Projects Abroad Fiji



Nausori Special School : mytripblog

"Special Needs" is an umbrella underneath which a staggering array of diagnoses can be wedged. Children with special needs may have mild learning disabilities or profound cognitive impairment; food allergies or terminal illness; developmental delays that catch up quickly or remain entrenched; occasional panic attacks or serious psychiatric problems. The designation is useful for getting needed services, setting appropriate goals, and gaining understanding for a child and stressed family.

Minuses and Pluses:

"Special needs" are commonly defined by what a child can't do -- by milestones unmet, foods banned, activities avoided, experiences denied. These minuses hit families hard, and may make "special needs" seem like a tragic designation. Some parents will always mourn their child's lost potential, and many conditions become more troubling with time. Other families may find that their child's challenges make triumphs sweeter, and that weaknesses are often accompanied by amazing strengths.

Enter Amanda McGrath and Charlotte Buckley - these two young ladies from the United Kingdom are placed at Nausori Special School where they help out in teaching and taking care of children with special needs. When I visited them, they were reading stories and playing with hand-puppets with the children. It was really good to see them engaged in interactive games with the children. The responses they got were positive. Amanda and Charlotte help out in different classes (age gaps) and were fully engrossed in their classes when I arrived.



Volunteer Story—Karen NGwenya

"I knew my time at Treasure House would be rewarding, but what I didn't know was how rewarding and how quickly I would fall in love with all of the children," said Karen Ngwenya, the Science Operations Officer at Coombabah State High School, who decided to spend two weeks of her time volunteering in Fiji.

Having already had the opportunity to work with orphans in Ethiopia, she wanted to be involved with helping disadvantaged children again. She chose to volunteer through Projects Abroad and travel to Fiji where she participated in their Care Project. Karen's placement was at Treasure House, an orphanage in Nadi, where she spent time with the orphans giving them individual attention. "Whether I chose to help the toddlers with their English reading and writing or the older children with their bookwork, I could see they were all happy to have someone spend one on one time with them."

The smiling, happy faces of the children greeted Karen when she came to Treasure House in the morning, and again in the afternoon. "My arrival each day was met by smiles and hugs by lots of the kids. Each day I would leave for lunch while they all had their afternoon sleep or rest and when I returned I was again greeted with the same happy smiles and hugs." Being with the children at the orphanage everyday meant that Karen had the opportunity to get to know them all individually. "I got to know the different personalities and special needs of the children from new born to late teenagers."

One of Karen's most memorable moments of her time in Fiji revolves around a trip where she and the orphanage staff took the children out for the day: "We took a trip to Lautoka (the second largest city about 45 minutes' drive away) to get some of the kids' school shoes for the coming school year. How excited they were to get to ride in the Treasure House van and see all the sites on the way. And they were even more excited to have their new, wrapped school shoes to carry home in a plastic bag."

After her two weeks of volunteering were drawing to a close, Karen wished she could've stayed longer, "My two weeks were by far not long enough, but in that time I did make wonderful connections with all the children, teenagers and especially the staff. How lucky these children are to have these caring, loving staff members in their lives."

"I hope to return sometime this year and I'm sure the same happy smiles will be there running out to meet me again."



Project Updates

Care and Teaching

There have been so many volunteers arriving for the Teaching Project and their placements have been pretty spot-on in the sense that they are able to share their skills and knowledge in a more fitting environment according to their expertise. Majority of volunteers in Fiji are here for the Teaching Project and are situated in Nadi and Suva at various primary schools on offer. With their individual projects at hand, the volunteers are doing remarkably well in facilitating positive change in the learning pattern of the Fijian children.

Animal Care in both regions has seen so many changes. At the moment, we have a PRO volunteer from the United Kingdom based at the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) in the capital city of Suva. She has been a driving force for so many improvements and has been very proactive with hosting workshops and skill building forums. At the West Charity Trust for Animal Welfare in Nadi, we've had amazing intern veterinarians come in to aid our local veterinarians thus making work so much easier for the shelter. The animals are definitely benefitting in both cities!

Community project

The Community Project has done so well recently and we're expecting more volunteers in the next few weeks to continue the great work that the previous volunteers have started. The volunteers are teaching at the village schools and also helping out in farming and community building, plus teaching computer classes for the mature. We hope that this trend continues in the future and the relationship between the community and Projects Abroad strengthens.



Photos Galore!

