

2012 Summer of Service

Kolkata, India

Dan Lee

For our Summer of Service, Rani Berry, Tina Ramineni,
and I worked with the Missionaries of Charity in
Kolkata, India.

I thought I would start by showing you a bit of the city
first. Here is a little taste of Kolkata!



Fruits are delicious here, definitely try the mangos



The Flower Market



A typical day in Kolkata, traffic everywhere



Spices, spices, spices.



Chai Tea Stand

Now let me describe what a typical day would be for me during my summer of service. Every day (except Thursdays because that was the volunteer's day off), I would go to the Mother House where the Sisters from the Missionaries of Charity would give us bananas, bread, and chai tea for breakfast. Then the sisters and all the volunteers would start our day by saying this prayer:

Dear Lord, the Great Healer, I kneel before You, since every perfect gift must come from You. I pray, give skill to my hands, clear vision to my mind, kindness and meekness to my heart. Give me singleness of purpose, strength to lift up a part of the burden of my suffering fellow men, and a true realization of the privilege that is mine. Take from my heart all guile and worldliness that with the simple faith of a child, I may rely on you.

Amen.

This prayer was very special to me because it was essentially my "Indian" version of morning coffee. It prepared me for my day and just made me feel energized and pure at heart.

There are many different houses set up around Kolkata where the Missionaries of Charity have a specific focus. The volunteers during orientation got to choose which places they wanted to volunteer at. In the morning session, I choose to work at Kalighat also known as the House of the Dying. This house is for people that suffer from chronic diseases or have a serious condition that is detrimental to their health. At Kalighat, I washed cloths, gave out medications, served food, bathed the patients, took their blood pressures and temperatures, did physical therapy exercises, and developed personal relationships with them. It was however a very emotional experience because the patients were constantly in pain and I unfortunately had to see many people pass away.



One of the rooms where the patients slept and rested.

Now here are some people I became quite close with at Kalighat. They are wonderful people and despite all the pain they endure, they are gentle, loving, and always have many stories to share. It's amazing how much joy can come from a person by just having a simple conversation with them or just showing them you care.



Me and Joseph



Me and Trhm



Me and Span Biwas

Than during the afternoon session, Rani, Tina, and I went to Daya Dan, which was an orphanage for disabled children. We got very close with all the kids and have many memories with them. We did many activities such as stretching, drawing, arts and crafts, mediation, singing, dancing, and many outdoor activities. I got very close with this one 8-year old child named Bhaskar. He was given away as an infant and was suffering from Malnutrition, Pneumonia, Down syndrome, and Cerebral palsy. One of the sisters named Sister Anvita gave me a task to work with him everyday and told me to write about his problems so that she could understand it. I spent a lot of my time with Bhaskar and miss him dearly. I hope he continues to grow and get better.





Me and Bhaskar

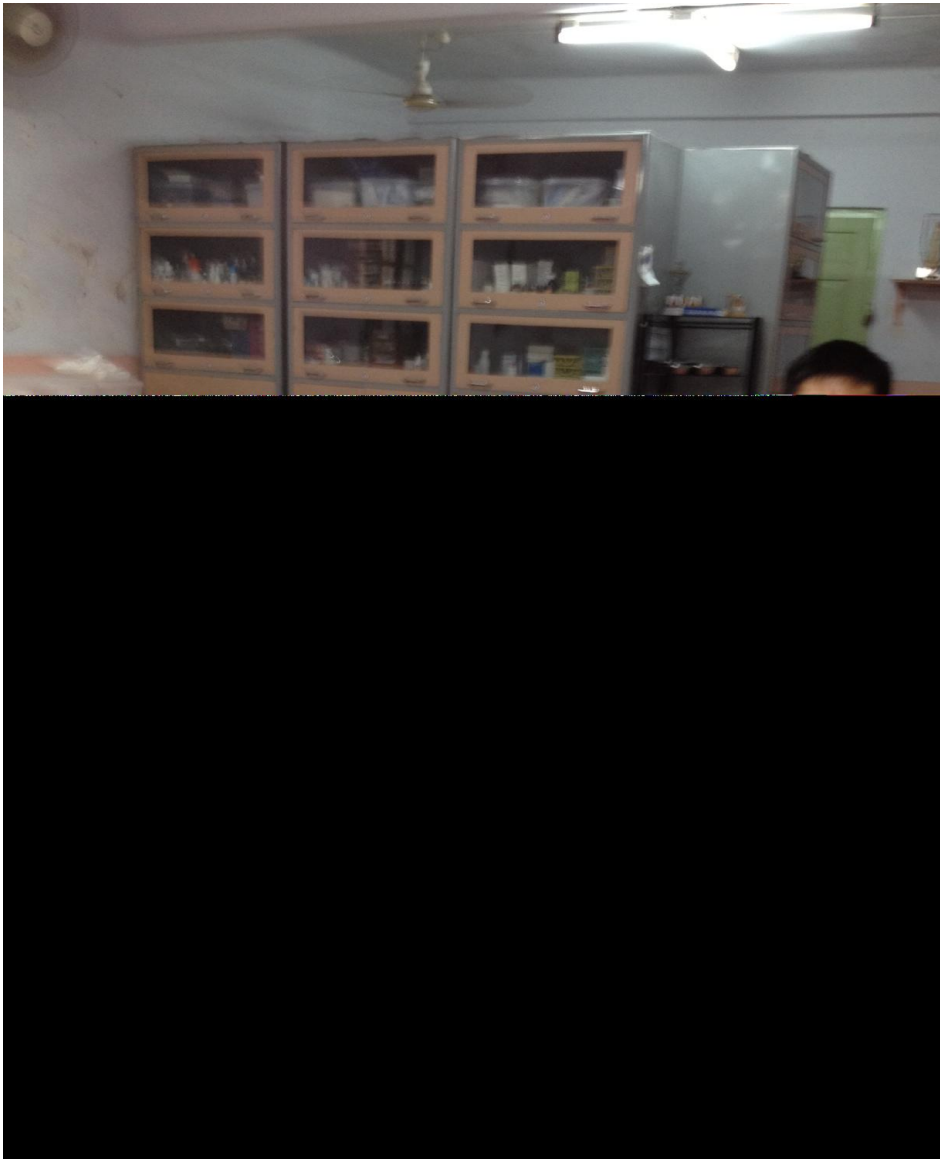


Emmanuel is always smiling and laughing



Little Johnny

Lastly on Monday and Friday, we worked at a free medical clinic where we cleaned and dressed wounds. We saw many gruesome wounds and got to be very familiar with treating these injuries. It was without a doubt an amazing medical experience.



The medical clinic. On a side note it was rather funny because Sister Anjali (the head sister at the clinic), had so much trouble with the iPhone camera that she took every picture out of focus!

On our last day, one of the sisters, Sister Anvita, wrote us a thank you note consisting of this quote from Mother Teresa: "You have been Created for Greater things. To Love and be Loved." This quote will stick with me my whole life and will motivate me to continue to always help the underprivileged and poor. We worked for about 7 weeks and couldn't believe how fast it went. It was certainly a unique experience that we will cherish forever.