

Jennifer McNamara, '01
Manila, Philippines

Melissa Moore, Ami Multani and I traveled to Tondo, a district of Manila in the Philippines. We worked each day of the week at the Missionaries of Charity Home for Joy for Sick Children. Approximately 50 Children lived at the home at any one time and their illnesses and disabilities covered a wide range of disease and ailments, including, but not limited to hydrocephalic, epilepsy, tuberculosis, cancer and severe mental retardation. We had many incredible experiences working with these children and they will forever remain a part of us.



The following is an excerpt from my journal dated June 7, 2000. It focuses on an afternoon spent with Raia, a severe epileptic.

"I had a really rewarding day today at the clinic. I think it's probably in part because I got a really good night of sleep finally. Today, Taia and I bonded. I really thinks she's very intelligent, she knows how to communicate what she needs, though she has no way of verbally expressing herself. Her seizures and spasms make me extremely nervous-especially since no one ther seems to pay attention to her. I had her standing up today, and for the first time since we have been here, I saw her smile and heard her precious laugh. She wants to walk more than anything-I can tell. When I had her sitting up straight, opposed to lying on the ground (which is how she is usually positioned in the mornings when taken out of her crib), she was wrestling with another child's shoes. It's almost as if she thinks a pair of shoes will help her to walk, to be like so many other children that she lives with. Later on, I tried to teach her to sound out her name and I think she might have

understood a little bit because she started imitating the sounds that I was making. When I thought she had finally come very close to pronouncing it perfect, I clapped and cheered-she was so completely happy and proud of herself. My heart really goes out to her. She, like many of the kids, has those eyes of desperation that you can look into and see a world of hopes and dreams that we take for granted. I look into them and try to see what she is feeling, and every once in a while, I think I actually might get a glimpse through the window to her heart. I wish I could help her walk, or to relieve the pains that she has that make her body shake so violently in spasms...I hope I'll be able to spend a little time with her each day before we leave."

Each day at the clinic was another experience like this one with another child critically in need of love and nurturing. The little time that we spent each day with these children meant the world to them...and to us.

