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Laventille, Trinidad



What was it about my summer of service that was so different from anything I've ever experienced before? A lot of people think that their abroad experiences are so "extraordinary", but what probably made my summer in Trinidad most meaningful was its nature of being "ordinary". It was the everyday people that fascinated me and brought a new light to life that had never been revealed to me.



While I was there, other than getting to know my other program-mates very well, (Joanny and Rami), I worked at RC Success School in Lavantille, which was right across the street from the Missionaries of Charity headquarters.

For three weeks, we worked at the school, helping the kids with numerous things, whether it was reading, computers, chess, or even just playing outside. It was the most enjoyable work I had when we went there. The children were wonderful to be around, and being with kids from a different culture helped me appreciate the little subtleties in life that make all of us human, not just American, Trini, black or white. I learned that almost anywhere you go, you can find people who are very close to your heart because they like to laugh, dance, eat, and enjoy life.



The sisters were magnificent as well and probably had the most impact on me emotionally and spiritually. They worked in the convent to feed and take care of abandoned "children" who have become heavily disabled mentally and physically. These girls face a terrible fate and are committed to living in the convent their entire lives under the care of the Sisters. Everyday the Sisters would wake up in the morning to face a life of devotion to caring just for others. Being in their presence and working with them for 2 weeks humbled me for life. No amount of work that I did there, or have ever done could be as unselfish, as invaluable as the work of the Sisters. Their unselfish devotion and belief in God and miracles is what causes them to have the energy everyday to try to get the children to do better, even though they may have not gotten better in the past 1 year, 2 years, or 10 years. They help from their heart and it is a miracle to see that kind of integrity and devotion in today's world. They also helped us much much more than we could have ever helped them by feeding us everyday and finding so many more opportunities for us. Miracle after miracle, I witnessed in the everyday people. One nine year old girl, Makeela, started out blind, unable to walk, talk, or do anything. Now she can see, talk, walk, and do

many things by herself, and some things with our help was also learning to integrate herself with the children at school.



The people we stayed with were also miraculous people. "Granny" was the woman we stayed with, and at 83 years old has the energy of a 17 year old girl. She goes to church every day, serving as an example to those who know her, to always do what you do with full faith and belief. In addition to spiritual learning, I experienced a lot of what the Trini culture had to offer, in terms of food, and limin' (just hangin' out), with friends we met through Granny and with the Eston Center girls with whom we put together a free summer camp for children in Tobago.



I am very grateful for my experience. I learned that the Summer of Service was not just about serving others, but it was a chance to see how humble people can be, and yet can make such a difference in your life and in their communities.