

Joanny Paul, '05
Trinidad & Tobago

This past summer, I spent six weeks with Mary Paul and Erica Goyal in Trinidad and Tobago. Our host "Granny" and "Uncle" took very good care of us. They treated us like their children. The six weeks basically flew by under their care and I will *definitely* miss Granny's cooking.



"Granny & Uncle"

For the first three and a half weeks, we worked at a local summer school in Laventille, RC Success. It was right across the street from where we were originally going to work: the Missionaries of Charity. Everyday, Monday through Friday, we helped children from ages 4 to 13 read and write. There were about thirty children in our class and only four "teachers" (they were younger than us and were training to be teachers in the future). At first the experience was overwhelming, but later, once we acclimated, the whole procedure was not only manageable, but enjoyable as well.

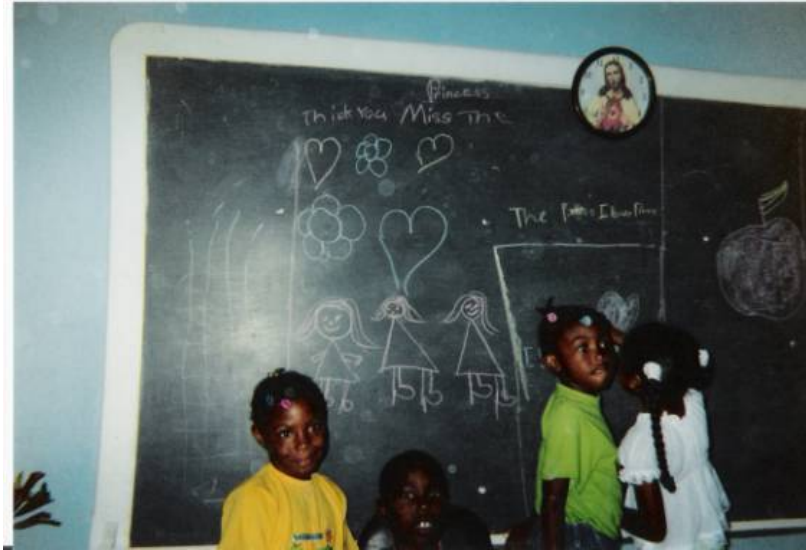
We planned a trip to Trinidad's sister island, Tobago, to help impoverished children there; however, in order to go with another group that had already planned to go to Tobago, we had to leave our summer camp early. On our last day, we threw a party for the children. We gave them candy and stickers, let them listen to Soca and Reggae, taught them some American games like "hot potato" and "musical chairs," and basically let them go crazy. I used up a whole roll taking pictures of this party because it was remarkable how excited these kids got over stickers! Trust me, on that last day the last thing we wanted to do was go to Tobago.



Me with my boys Curdeel, Shaqueil, and Jerome



Some of the kids getting ready for a good photo-op (they loved taking pictures).



The Princesses

By the end of the three and a half weeks, all of us made some lifelong friends. These kids will forever be in our hearts and hopefully we will be in theirs. It was definitely hard to say goodbye after such an amazing experience. We got to know these kids so well. Everyday was a struggle to realize that these kids were not being fed regularly. The amazing part is that they were still happy to see us everyday, with or without food in their stomachs.

In Tobago we organized a free summer camp for the local impoverished children. We recruited kids to come to our camp a day before it started. Even though it was only three days long, we definitely had an action packed camp. We played soccer ("football"), cricket, and tug of war. On the last day, we made the kids a piñata (they actually decorated it, we just filled it), the kids put on a hand-puppet show: the boys "The Ginger Bread Man" and the girls "The Three Little Pigs," had races, and gave them wafers, drinks, and other goodies. We didn't form as much of an attachment to these kids as in our first camp, but it was still a lot of fun to get to know these kids.



Boy's reenactment of the "Gingerbread Man"



Girl's rendition of the "Three Little Pigs"



Breaking the piñata (we didn't think it was going to make it!)



Mckella and Shaqueil (they were best friends)

Before the group we came with left, we did a lot of touristy activities with them. We went snorkeling, went to the beach, and we rode in a glass boat. We really got to know the girls on the trip really well. On our last three days in Tobago, we went to the beach, stayed out late, shopped, and had a lot of fun (actually I was a dork and read Harry Potter for most of the time). We stayed at the Tropikist hotel, which was less than a 5 minute walk to the beach (less than a minute running). I ran everyday that I was there (don't worry, Erica and Mary thought I was nuts).

For the last ten days of our summer of service, we helped out at the Missionaries of Charity. We did such activities like help feed the children and "Grannies" that were permanent residents of the Charity, clean up after lunch, help wash and fold the clothes, and organize their monthly distribution of food for the local hungry people. On average, we spent about six to eight hours there a day. We also went to mass with them on occasion. In addition to helping the Sisters, we got to spend a lot of time helping their smallest member read and write. Her name is Mckella and she was a sweetheart. She was the most developed child at the Charity. When she first arrived at the Charity, she could not see or talk. When we met her she could do both, which she displayed amusingly singing Christian songs at the top of her lungs. We will definitely miss the Sisters and all the residents and workers of the Missionaries of Charity. They have touched my heart and I hope I have left an impression on theirs.



The Sister's of the Missionary of Charity