

# POVERELLO TEEN CENTRE

## YOUTHS on the move .....



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### Watch out for our next issue.....

- NYAA Silver Kayak expedition
- Mount Ophir expedition
- Talks from various institutions
- PTC will be celebrating 10 years of Youth Outreach
- .....and many more

# PTC Youth Project for the poor and needy in Vietnam

In September'08, we were invited by the ITE East College to collaborate with them in a service project for the needy children in a Primary School in Vietnam, Ben Tre Province. Our preparation for the trip entails a teambuilding session with ITE team in their campus, a 2 day wall painting training at our centre, 1 day for Preliminary Training inclusive of Basic First Aid, Vietnam Culture and Language, Custom and General safety precaution, Journal writing, Project briefings, Vaccinations and 1 day for sorting out and packing of donated items for distributions to the needy families. A Project briefing was also organized for the youths' parents to reassure as well as disseminate information.

This being our 5<sup>th</sup> overseas community service project, we thought it should be a breeze in terms of being mentally and physically prepared. Still it was no surprise to find ourselves just as anxious and apprehensive about how the project will eventually turn out. Perhaps it was also our 'die die' must complete the project aim that we had set for ourselves especially in our attempt to promote values of determination and resilience in the youths. We were most aware of the make up of the Team members particularly the junior members with their challenging group dynamics. Face to face with the 9 classrooms in desperate need of a good scrub and at least a few coats of paint, we were right to be apprehensive about the completion of the tasks compounded by the Principal's insistent to keep the class going even during the painting. It truly tested our skilfulness in planning and organization, in such a way that we avoid getting into the way of the ITE's electrical team who were installing the fans and lights and vice versa. In the end, the plan had to change from day to day according to the overall work progress.

## Work Process..... Leading to significant growth and development

Daily at 7.15am after our breakfast we leave our lodging in 4 loads of van in a half hour journey to the school and work begins before 8am, breaking for an hour's lunch, continuing till about 6pm. It was certainly grueling work at a consistent pace, particularly for the youths who are not used to this kind of work pace. In any group, it is inevitable to find the usual infamous 'skivers' as well as those 'allergic' to dirt amongst the majority of enthusiastic and earnest ones, we too experienced the same

malady for the first two days. However owing to the nightly reflections and evaluations, there was a significant change of behaviours and attitudes. Their daily assessment and planning efforts showed their gradual ownership of this project and its outcome.

The first two days, two different tasks was performed by the two teams from PTC. One task was to ensure that the tables get a new finish on the top with decal.

The difficulty with this task was that no one had any experience in and the materials given for our use were also unfamiliar to us. At the same time, we also



realized that the tables were heftily-build, hence carrying them in and out of the classroom for the decal work was strenuous. With much trial and error coupled with lots of patience that we finally got the knack of the most effective way of getting the job done. Meanwhile the group had to also find ways and means to try to strengthen and repair some of the tables which were falling apart.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, the first group had already completed the table decal tasks so they merge with the 2<sup>nd</sup> group that were cleaning and painting the walls, windows and doors of the classroom, both interior and exterior. With As the ceiling were much higher than those found in Singapore, it was a limited few with height advantages armed with the 5 metre pole attached to their roller, entrusted with this neck breaking task. The rest were either given a roller or a brush to tackle the hard to reach corners. Again we face the usual problems encountered in our previous experiences in overseas painting







tasks : the quality of paint. Each batch of paint that were supplied were of different shades although they bore the same brand and colour. The locals use 'lime wash' which was vastly different in terms of texture, from the whitewash first coat paint that we normally use. Hence the mixing of paint was a frustrating experience for those assigned to the task. However what was edifying was the resilient of the youths who continued each day in a stoic manner to adjust and make do with each difficulty that they faced. On the 4<sup>th</sup> day, the process was disrupted with some feeling unwell. By the next day, three quarter of the team were affected by one ailment or another, ranging from sore throats, coughs, running nose to more serious ones like fever, dizziness and diarrhoea . The shortage of bottled water supply did not help the situation either. Even then despite their discomfort, they were very reluctant to stop work due to the fact that everyone knew that each pair of hands was invaluable to the end result as well as not to affect the morale of the team. This was a significant change from their usual 'slack while you can ' attitude. It was surely a hopeful sign that the process of the project was having positive impact on them.

In fact different aspects of the project were an effective tool for their learning and exposure. Our first day's visit to the Orphanage to distribute rice and goodie bags was an eye and mind opening experience. Upon entering the small and sparsely furnished shop house, we were astonished to know that 30 over boys ranging from 9-17 years of age were residents here along with a few adults and social workers. The short visit as well as travelling on the road, encountering the rustic environment, beggars, dilapidated homes existing alongside with shopping malls generated an intriguing reflections of the cultural differences as well as an appreciation of our own lifestyles and how we could make it more meaningful.

The Bazaar held on the 5<sup>th</sup> day was quite low key, compared to our previous projects. Only half the team was on two shifts to help organize the coming and going of locals to ensure order and replenishing the items on the tables. Due to the locals' concern, this Bazaar was more a distribution of goods to them instead of our usual practice of selling them at a low cost and donating the amount to a fund for the educational purpose of poor students. The youths upon witnessing the local villagers' need for the items donation were humbled by their gesture of gratitude. The event prompted their own reflection and discussion on the differences of their lifestyles compared to their own and what they saw as positive and negative of healthy lifestyle.

### Final Touch up ..... Cultural Exchange

On the 6<sup>th</sup> day was the final touch up of the paintings and clean up of classrooms. The team was on full mobilization to see to this final task



before lunch time. There was a sense of completion and fulfillment seeing the new façade of the school, the result of last few days of hard work, bringing on a more brighter and newer look to it. We had a few hours to spare before the Cultural exchange cum farewell event due to take place in the afternoon so we took the opportunity to tour a nearby farm with a fruit plantation, which proved to be most interesting and educational for us all especially the youths who have never seen durian harvesting, cocoa on trees and other unusual fruits not easily found back in Singapore.



We returned to the school to see crowds of locals already mingling and admiring this new outlook of

their schools. Children with their shy smiles were

coming to some of the youths to shake their hands and even to ask to have them autograph their notebooks! For the next hour or so, we were busy blowing up balloons to give the courtyard a festive atmosphere, to the delights of the students who loved the balloons so much that it became a source of distraction during the Principal's speech. Our team combined with the ITE team had prepared a presentation of cultural fashion show featuring our various ethnic traditional costume, Percussion music, guitar and singing and Japanese Drum beat, ending it off with a medley Christmas



songs and wishes. The school then presented us with a Certificate of Appreciation for sprucing up the Primary School and for the donations of items to the needy families. After the event, we helped tidy up the courtyard, the classroom, took group photographs to keep remembrance of this unique experience. That evenings' evaluation was a celebration of sort that echoed all our sense of relief at being able to complete

what we set out to do through sheer hard work and perseverance. It was a task worthy of a pat on the back for the great team spirit of each member and constantly upholding a 'never say die' attitude. Most of all, the bonding of the members that was further strengthened during these 8 days would be most helpful in the continuation of our value programme back in Singapore.

The next day was spent travelling back to Ho Chi Ming City for a short tour and some shopping at the China town. It was expectedly a different shopping experience from that in Singapore. What was familiar was the satisfaction of haggling over some sales items that were clearly overpriced as advised by our guide. Apparently it is a way of life in Vietnam.

### Final Evaluation

A deeper reflection of the whole trip took place in an atmosphere filled with a sense of fulfillment and relieved mostly of the fact that we were able to complete what we came to do. In spite of their bodily discomforts, partly due to the work strain acquired from the past few days as well as assorted symptoms of the flu virus, the spirit of the group was one of hearty enthusiasm, a unanimous desire to experience as much as possible. In the midst of positive signs of development and growth, there were also regrets and grouses which were ironically catalysts to helping them towards self-awareness, see different perspectives, and resolve issues in a more effective way. The outcome was greater bonding, openness and appreciation of one another.



**Poverello TC and ITE College East posing for the camera**





.....this whole project gives me a new experience in everything I do. It challenged my brain when solving problem situations. I've certainly learnt what good Teamwork can achieve.

Charlene

.....Its certainly a scary experience to see so many motorcycles on the road and to see people driving recklessly and some falling down from their bikes...I wondered...why are their government not doing anything about it?

.....Tomorrow would be our first day of work...hope it doesn't rain or we can't start work and also that nobody gets sick or hurt otherwise work will be affected and we are so short of time.....I better keep a look out for my group members.....

.....Thinking back on the past days...working as a team is much more efficient than working solo even if there are sure to be some conflicts here and there.

....PTC is like the farmers and we are the plant. PTC can throw in fertilizers but we must want to grab it ourselves and learn from it. Our motto is to finish the paintings of the school and hand it back in more improve condition...I believe we should not do things half-way.

Kelvin



What struck me are the smiles of the children and the beggars we met along the way.....

Itiel

I feel lucky to be living in Singapore but even though the children here look poor, they seemed happy. I'm glad to be doing something here that is worthwhile and that will make them have a better place to study so I'm happy too.

Tin Yam



...I was quite tired and lazy today so I skived! And even became clumsy spilling paint. I decided I must try to sleep better tonight so that my performance is better tomorrow. I think I've learnt more awareness of myself and better sense of being responsible....

Hong Hoe

....at first I felt very tired in the morning but then I began to enjoy being able to do table decal, patching up the tables. Later I also joined the painting team as they needed more help. Unlike yesterday, I did not waste time today and seeing the children happy and playing, I felt more motivated and happier at the end of the day. Seeing the finished tables and classrooms just energized me.....

Hong Lan





....the interesting thing about this journey for me is that I get to help the poor for the first time! I was facing difficulties with my clumsiness, and carelessness, causing more work for myself and others!! But I've learnt what it takes to be a team member, to be more hardworking instead of 'skiving' and being more responsible to the task given to me so as not to cause more worries for others.....

Dominic

.....i think I was disappointing myself as well as others for the first 2 days with my lack of concentration, fooling around and not doing my best....but I promise myself that will change tomorrow....I will give my best.

.....in the end, I was happy that such a rundown school could become so new and clean again. I'm happy I gave my best to help.

....one thing that struck me was an incident during the Bazaar when I saw an old man with his grandson trying to choose some clothes but he move very slowly and didn't know how to choose what the family needed, I think. When time was up, he only had a little bag in his hand and like looking so sad! I felt so sad also so quickly try to help him.



Felicia

For the past few days we have not really done much for the classes and still have not done much today becos' of some delays and "slackers' around. Its kind of sad becos' ...don't they realize that this is for the children to study and we had only left 2 days and we have 5 more rooms to paint!

.....I have a sad feeling becos' we didn't really have enough time to do all the finishing touch to the building...but at least we manage to finish the painting.



Zhong Xin



....it's so interesting to experience travelling on a ferry that is so huge and that take not only humans but also vehicles too!

Looking at the terrible condition of the school on that first day, I told myself I'm going to work hard to make it better.....

.....during lunch break when I visited the shops around the school, it was shocking to me that they don't even have a normal fridge and it was so hottttttt! I thought....if I ever have to stay at the village, I'm sure to be a burden to them.....

Yi Hui

.....i like repairing the tables but the conditions were quite bad so have to think of other ways to make it better. Seeing the smiles of the children at the school was motivating even when I was tired....



Yong Sheng

# Volunteers' Appreciation Day

On the 4 Nov 2008, our volunteers came together for the celebration of the Volunteers' Appreciation Day. Like the previous year, the event was held in Changi Aloha chalet. The chalet was booked for 3 days 2 nights with the 1st day dedicated to the volunteers while the 2nd day for the youths.

The volunteers enthusiastically arrived at the chalet at 3pm. With the scenic and refreshing view of Changi beach, they sat around the dinning table chit chatting and enjoying the home-baked muffins baked by Sebastian. The programme started with a talk on nutrition by Mr Goh of CGH. He gave us an enriching insight into the nutrition facts of food and also



carefully deliberated the questions and answered them, clearing the volunteers' doubts. The 2-hour presentation was definitely beneficial for all of us.

After the talk, the volunteers were treated to a sumptuous dinner prepared by Cecilia Fung's father-in-law. The night ended with the viewing of the movie "The Scarlet & the Black".

The youths started streaming in at 10am the next morning. Year end evaluation was the 1st item on the programme. They did some reflections for 2008 and thoughts for 2009. Amazing race started immediately after lunch. During the race, the youth learned to

communicate with their peers and to work out their differences to achieve the goal of completing the race. As one of the youths said "It's not so much about winning but rather completing the whole race."

Buffet dinner was served after the volunteers and management arrived. During the dinner, they were treated to a Japanese drum performance put up by the Sec 2, 3 and 4.

Special programmes were lined-up after dinner. This the youths were treated to: Stephany's modern dance, Uncle Philip's magic show and the group singing

by all the volunteers. Our student-guitarists also performed a series of songs as a tribute thanking the volunteers. Then followed the presentation of certificates for the various activities to the Sec 4s. The alumni received their PTC alumni badges in recognition of their efforts as youth volunteers. The volunteers were also presented with a CD titled "Hearts Gifts", specially compiled for them. The evening ended with a toast to all the volunteers, management and also the graduating class of 2008. Everyone left shortly after the toast leaving behind the youths to their movie marathon accompanied by the staff.





# Christmas 2008

Back from our overseas community project in Vietnam, we were all feeling excited and happy to be celebrating Christmas on 23 December. Before we embarked to Vietnam, we were told to prepare a gift not more than S\$10 and wrap it for the gift exchange activity between PTC staff, youths and volunteers. A baby picture was also to be submitted. All were told too that it would be a pot luck event and the youths were encouraged to prepare the food with their families, as it would mean more bonding time with their parents in the kitchen! The day arrived and from 5pm the revellers arrived, each bringing his/her specially cooked item to this "pot-luck" party. It was tempting to dig in immediately but we adjourned to the Hall first to view a video of the Vietnam trip done up by our very own PTC Alumni Youth cum budding film producer, Berwin Tan! After that Certificates of Achievement were presented to participants of the Vietnam project, with Dominic and Hong Hoe (Sec 2 of 2008) sharing their experiences in Vietnam. Feasting time was next and all hungrily 'attacked' the assorted spread of buffet. Not only was the taste of the food satisfying and appetizing, heartwarming scenes of our volunteers having cheery



and engaging conversations with the then Sec 2s, especially those who were in the respective Life Skill groups were observed. After such a hearty meal, 4 of our youths played the guitars as we sang Christmas songs and medleys. Finally it came to the 2<sup>nd</sup> highlight of the evening, gift exchange time! BUT! It wasn't as simple and straightforward as just exchanging. The purpose of the baby picture was for each of us to pick 1, find out who that person was in the picture, and that would be the person to receive the gift that we bought. It was noisy and chaotic but exciting as everyone frantically went about to guess and find the identity of the person of the picture they had in their hands. When the last 3 who could not "solve" the identification, they were forfeited to do funny body actions to the tune the rest of us sang. On that elated note, sparkling juice was poured out for each and everyone, and a toast to the New Year was made. With that, the evening's event came to an end and we took a group picture as a memory of the fun and cherished time we spent with each other.



by Shawn Quek, staff

# Lunar New Year 2009

Chinese New Year celebrations were held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2009. This year's celebration was slightly different; a steamboat lunch session was in store for all of us. As staff made the preparations the youths slowly streamed in after school. A few of the Alumni youths were also able to make it for the occasion. Cooking of the food went underway as everyone crowded around the tables with their plates and hovered around the available steamboat pots to cook their food. Different shades of red attire were also donned by most of us to suit the festive mood. The range and bulk of raw ingredients seemed overwhelming—chicken, pork, beef, fish/meat balls, vegetables, sausages, etc.... but steadily and slowly were finished up and very soon, groups of activities were beginning among the youths. Some were taking photographs, some were pitting their skills and wits in Chinese Chess, and the traditional card games such as Black-Jack and Poker were casually played among the youths. Sister Maria took the opportunity to go around giving out red packets to all the youths who were there. The time came when PTC had to close for the day and the youths grudgingly left the place, but at the same time looking forward to the four long days of Lunar New Year.

