

From Wales to the Philippines - Eleanor Margetts

I see such a positive change in me

It seems completely crazy, but I am officially at the final stage of my volunteer year with Assumption. The weeks seem to shoot by these days and I'm now thinking about how to "fit things in" before I leave and visit as many places as possible! This is especially so as we are currently at a very busy point in our work at the Local Government Unit in San Jose – summer in the Philippines has been surprisingly packed with lots of different activities and experiences.



The Philippine summer, with heat that I had never even imagined before, starts in March and lasts until about June (although it seems as though the rainy season is already upon us!); even though schools get a long vacation, there is still plenty to do. Right now, alongside our environment office, I am running a week-long orientation for local university students in their summer internship at the office. They are a group of about 70 young people, and we have so far spent the week mixing community work (such as litter-picking) with lectures and activities about the environment. I've been busy writing presentations, running workshops and ensuring that our students are both learning and having a good time! Alongside this work, we are also currently welcoming the new batch of AMA volunteers in their week-long orientation seminar at our volunteer house. It's been lovely to get to know them over the past few days, and I am looking forward to hearing more about their year-long journey as it unfolds. So needless to say, it's been a pretty hectic time!



Aside from this week, we've had an interesting summer working with people from literally ALL ages – we ran a Senior Citizens Environmental Course on Thursdays, then a Coastal Club for pre-schoolers on Fridays – it has been great to experience environmental education outside of the "school" setting and to show that everybody benefits from learning about taking care of Earth. Having spent time working in environmental education, I now feel inspired to continue this kind of work in the future – I have developed a passion for taking care of the environment that I will definitely carry with me when I go home.

Also this summer, I have had the wonderful pleasure of being visited by both my parents and my sister. It was so lovely to see them, and definitely what I needed to "tie-me-over" until I see them again in the UK. I am having a great time in the Philippines, but it is hard to be separated from my family! I am so happy that they were able to share a snippet of my experience with me.

Anyway, as my volunteer year enters its twilight, I have found myself increasingly reflective (and almost melancholy!). Although I still have new things to experience, and my time here is definitely not yet over, I can't help but feel saddened that I will soon be leaving this community that I have learnt to call home. While not without its difficulties, volunteering in the Philippines is an enlightening experience. I look back to who I was when I started, and I see such a positive change in me – I have done things I would never have been able to do before, I have met people and befriended people from all walks of life and I have settled into a place that is so different from Wales but I am somehow able to call "home" - who knows what else this year will bring!