

Graduation Highlights!

Graduation time at Christians' Haven is always a highlight in the year. Of course there are the celebrations at their schools but the best party is on our campus when CH kids and staff throw a bash for their family of graduates.

Graduations were in late March for both High School and College. We were blessed to have a team from the Walloon Lake Community Church in Michigan visiting during that time. It made the party even more special. During the celebration each of the graduates are expected to give a speech. That is always a humorous and emotional time. Some of our kids are natural performers while others are very deep and reflective. It makes for a quite rewarding evening and always goes late into the night.

Two of our college graduates gave very insightful speeches that are reprinted for you. Please enjoy them as much as we at the party did. They are reprinted unedited. Remember that English is a second language to the CH kids.

College:

Reynaldo Jerusalem, BS in Social Work, seeking employment

Cherwin Baricuatro, certificate in Automotive, considering going on to a four year program

Danny Lasiban, certificate in Automotive, seeking employment

Celito Sermon, certificate in Automotive continuing on in Marine Engineering

Shane Bais, certificate in Office Management, seeking employment

Aiza Conol, BS in Social Work, seeking employment



Please pray for our graduates. Some of the programs they have graduated from are stepping stones to other programs of study. Others of our students have finished their course of study and are ready for employment. (Sponsors will be notified as to the specific status of their sponsored student. Thank you so much for helping them reach their goals.)

Shane's Words

By Shane Bais

Graduated March 2011 with certificate in Office and Business Management



First and foremost, I would like to take this opportunity to thank God for this opportunity to stand here in front of you and to speak about my challenges and happiness that I have encounter here in CH. I really thankful most especially to our God for using Christians' Haven to rescued me from nothing and restored me to give me everything that has in life to an ordinary person. CH teaches me to dream a better future. From the staff and houseparent whom I loved, thank you for all the sacrifices that you have done not just for me but also for all of us here. Thanks for sharing those of your happy moments with me and I won't really forget those such good advice and encouragement to pursue my studies and to continue with a flow of life. From my co-CH ward especially to the college students I am thankful that I was there during your good and bad times. I just want to ask and apology or sorry to those person I hurt and also to especially to God for letting me finished my studies. I believe that I learned a lot of things from it. Way back from year 2005, that year was my first time to enter college life and it feels scared/exciting when I took my first course, I took up 4-year degree Bachelor of Theology in Christian Education. I took this kind of course because I love teaching children; I really enjoyed these things when I was in Bible School. I learned a lot of things from the viewpoint of the Bible and secular world but it sad to think that I stop studying from that Bible school when I was in 3rd year college because I have encounter a difficult problems in my life. I've been diagnosed from cancer or bone cancer, stage 2-A and during those times I felt so down, I don't know what to think, to do or to say but to cry and cry and cry. During those times I always ask myself, when I'm going to die? Tomorrow? The next day? Or now? But God is really good to me or to my life because He sends good doctors, good nurses to take care of me and He chose good medicines for me to survive in life. And prayer is really a powerful because I know that many people are praying for my health especially here, at Manila, and even outside of the country and I just want to thanks for those people who prayed for me during those times of my suffering in my sickness. Sometimes I don't really understand His will but God set a plan for my life and not just to me but also to every individual. I just want to leave this message to all you guys, that whatever trials, struggles in life that will come to your lives don't give up nor give in and don't let the enemies to work on your life but instead surrender it to God. If you are encountering a difficult thing, take it as a challenge; all you have to do is to fight for the good fight of faith in God. Sooner or later I will depart from CH and I will really miss all of you. May God extend His blessing to each one of us here. Once again, thank you for listening and good evening!



CHRISTIANS' HAVEN

A Ministry to Street Children and Orphans of the Philippine Islands
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My Voyage In My Dream

By Reynaldo Jerusalem

Graduated March 2011 with BS in Social Work



They say that a person's dreams result from unexpressed motives and behavior during conscious level activities. I thank the significant others that while I was in my dream during my deep sleep they became the cause of my many unexpressed motives and behavior. This evening I would like to take this moment to let them know that their sacrificing efforts have compelled my desire to fervently thank you all for coming to voluntarily include yourselves in the voyage of my dream during my deep sleep. In my moments of perplexities you helped me out in my confusions. The words of blessings from your mouth had grace me that it quenched me to become thirsty and ask more of it unendingly. Along the way in my dream your words of counsel became my vessel toward a destination of a place called success. There were many times I wanted to wake up and stop dreaming but you challenged me and I fell back to sleep and were pulled back on the place where you want me to accomplish my dream and voyage. Every time you see that I was about to be awoken in my sleep and stop dreaming you kept on challenging me. How I wished at times I could have got up to my knees and ran away. Yet, I did not do it for I have learned that apart from your grace as my mentors/examples/directors I will never have the chance to be here making praises of thanksgiving to the Lord through you. Thank you for the guidance that has helped me so I could see myself through. You have not just come to meet me in my dream but even have accompanied me in my voyage and now I am in the first phase of success. In one hand you have just awoken me in my dream so to witness these self-fulfilling accomplishment of success. Thank you for depositing a compiled book of words of wisdom and advices in me. To all friends who supports this family—Christians' Haven and to my sponsor whom I will never forget your goodness as I go back to sleep and make my voyage again for another phase of task to be accomplish in my dream. I wanted to keep on thanking you in all my life to this cause but I also believe that this is just the beginning of my thanksgiving for greater announcement that will happen in my life. To all staffs of CH who has devoted their lives to be exploited by the Lord particularly here at CH, to Pastor Jun who has a diligent service in this ministry, to Ate Jane, my Social Work adviser and single house parent, to Kuya Ruel, who has been lavish enough to share his words of wisdom and has a passionate heart to understand my personality he once to told me to "Always trust the process and cooperate with the process" even if there will be times that there will only be few who will be playing his role or even in times of confusion and to Sir Lyn and Ma'am Betsy Ragsdale and family who has great part in making this event possible for Christians' Haven and in my life.

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CHRISTIANS' HAVEN
A Ministry to *Street Children* and
Orphans of the Philippine Islands

Adding A New "R"

By Lynn R. Ragsdale, President



It is a core value of Christians' Haven to reach out to the poor and marginalized children on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines. The Philippines can sadly claim nearly two million children living on the streets without homes, daily food, parental care, and Christian love. We are firmly committed to reaching these children and verbalize our strategy with some appropriate "R" words.

RESCUE children from despair, neglect, and abuse.

RESTORE those children to wholeness physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

RETURN them to their culture as equipped, educated, mature disciples of Jesus who will be culture changers.

We know that the heart of Jesus is to these children. But in a study of Acts and specifically the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul, we do not see him establishing homes for children. We find him establishing churches. It is the church who must reach the lost and hurting of the world. Christians' Haven is an arm of every Church and Christian that prays and supports us. It must be that way.

Christians' Haven must also be part of God's strategy of reaching the world. We must not rob the Filipino people of being part of the ministry to hurting children in their own country. To accomplish that goal we are developing a church planting strategy that will begin in our area of Mindanao. This is an island that has approximately less than 5% of the population that are evangelical Christians. It is also known as the most dangerous island in the country with the constant threat of Islamic terrorism. This leads to more and more poverty that leads to more and more children left to the streets. Only the presence of Christ and His Glorious Church can change this place!

So we are introducing a new "R" word to our overall strategy.

REACH the lost through a network of church plants in culturally important locations.

Although we are still in the infant stages of implementing this church planting strategy we have some very clear goals for these new churches.

Goal #1 - The churches will be planted in places where high populations are present to provide the greatest impact among lost people. This follows the pattern of Paul in the Book of Acts.

Goal #2 - There will be a four-year plan implemented for a church to become fully independent financially thus allowing for dignity and ownership among the local church members.

Goal #3 - Each new church will be a church planting church that will plant and fund new churches themselves.

Goal #4 - Each new church will be birthed with a heart of compassion and be partner churches to Christians' Haven in reaching out to the abused and neglected children of their area. This will allow Christians' Haven to expand their ministry more rapidly and effectively.

Please pray for us as we continue to develop and implement this exciting new part of our overall ministry to the island of Mindanao.

A WLCC Visitor's Reflections – April 2011

by Kevin Klevern member of Walloon Lake Community Church, Walloon Lake, Michigan



WLCC Short Term Mission Team

As a follow-up to last month, I (Kevin) thought I would give you (my church family) a taste of what a short term mission trip is like in the hopes that you would consider one yourself and perhaps join in on the next trip Walloon takes, especially if we go back to the Philippines. Buckle up, and try to experience the ride twelve time zones away....and back.

Friday, April 1st: Leave for Metro airport from the church at 8am. "Wheels up" about 4pm for the flight first to Nagoya, Japan. Layover there for a couple of hours as we have to get off the plane, get rechecked through security and reboard for the 4 hour continuation to Manila, with an arrival just before midnight on Saturday. Lost a whole day there somewhere in that line visible only on a

map: The International Date Line. Not much to report

for Saturday, April 2, other than it still is a challenge to sleep on a plane, but on international flights at least they feed you! Two vehicles necessary to get us to a hotel in Manila for a few hours rest.

Sunday, April 3rd: Starts with an hour walk at 6:30 am with Ruel, the Christians' Haven director, who leads us to the waterfront that is bustling with activity as the locals are enjoying the coolness before the heat of the day. After breakfast (with an American option to ease some stomachs into the trip) we visit the burial memorial of Jose Rizal, martyred by the Spanish in 1896 for his writings that eventually spur the Philippines into Independence, with a partnership with the USA for just under a half-century. Nearby is the plaque that commemorates complete freedom by the Filipinos in 1946. The site is about a block away from Gen MacArthur's hotel he employed when he fulfilled his promise "I shall return". From there we visit the American Pacific War Cemetery which looks much like the one at Colleville-sur-Mer which you may have seen at the beginning and end of "Saving Private Ryan". We have our own Sunday morning service and reflections here before one last flight from the island of Luzon/Manila to Cagayan De Oro on the island of Mindanao. We eat with the college kids at the CH college house in the city before one last leg of our journey: a two hour drive to the Christians' Haven (CH) campus at Tuod, where cell phone signals die....The kids greet us like it is Christmas morning and with refreshments we don't settle down until close to midnight. We all feel a sort of uncomfortable rock star status with how they honor us.

Monday, April 4th: As a way to connect with local pastors, after a 5:30am devotional and breakfast the program with area pastors scheduled at 9 begins after 10am, as Filipino time is just that: Filipino time. You get used to it after a while, sort of, but those of us wired to live by the clock will need more time than others to stop looking at our watches. After a morning together we enjoy a feast including 3 roasted pigs. I will share more details of what happened to the swine the night before one-on-one if you need to know. We spent the afternoon organizing their library to ease in to our labors for the week. Early evening is sports/play with the kids. Dinner, like lunch and breakfast as well, includes copious amounts of rice. Devotions in a large group occur after we eat. Bed is welcomed.



Tuesday, April 5th: We shift around from the boys' cottage to the girls' cottage each morning for devotions. After we eat (more rice) a nice breakfast that includes meat and fruit (like most meals), we hit the paint brushes and rollers. The boys' dorm needs a fresh white coat and lots of rollers polish off the job by early afternoon. We start on the black railings and find that the kids can see and reach the top rail easily. Unfortunately, with that painted FIRST, it is a bit more of a challenge to paint bottom rails and spindles when you have to lean over freshly painted things. I leave paint clothes at CH at the end of the week as they are not worth the return trip. Note to self: Give some instruction to the kids about what to paint first when the project resumes on Thursday. After a day in the heat, trying to stay in the shade as much as possible, we are again ready for bed when night comes. To be precise though, at the equator, there are 12 hour days and nights, all year long. Lights out is usually between 10 and 11pm. The AC in the rooms and the showers are welcome comforts....

Wednesday, April 6th: I realize at breakfast that the eggs, as most foods, are allowed to cool, and most everything we would serve "hot" is consumed at room temperature. The drinks we would serve "cold" are the same. Not wrong, just different. When in Rome....After a large group devotion I led we were off for feedings. The Badjao people are one of the many tribal sub-groups in the Philippines. (trivia: know how many islands this nation has? Try 7100, and no, I did not mistype the #!) The Badjao's number in the hundreds and are a squatters' village at the edge of the ocean. It is a challenge to count them as they have no names, even for each other. They live in 10 x 10 huts about 4 to 5 feet off the ground which allows them to walk easily underneath. The Americans however get stiff necks. Most adult Filipino men are about 5'6" tops, and the tribal folk even smaller. Never have I seen such poverty in person. Some of our group struggle to maintain composure. Wow, do we take what we have here for granted! Pictures will not capture the oppressive heat or smells that attack our senses. From there, back to the City to feed street kids is a huge upgrade in conditions. No one can experience this and remain the same person....will be processing this for some time to come. That night we walk 10 minutes from the CH campus for prayer meeting at the small local church. Believers are believers everywhere, and the familiar songs and tunes make us feel quite at home. Jason shared the short message, as we were all warned to be prepared to have something ready to go at the drop of a hat. He did a nice job, and an even better one on Sunday when he preached.

Thursday April 7th: Back to black paint all over hands and fingernails after cleaning up. The morning briefing after appointing myself Grand Pooh-Bah of painting got the bottom-to-top method of application down, and the girls' cottage railings covered by early afternoon, with the rest of the time touching up missed areas on the boys' cottage. The best part of this day was the evening Graduation celebration when the high school and college graduates were honored. The USA director, Lynn Ragsdale, had the privilege of seeing "Key" graduate from college after being his sponsor for many years. The staff were the ones all choked up seeing the end of a long haul, or in other words, the fruits of their labors finally celebrated. The partying went on until I was yawning and needed to catch some shuteye.



Friday, April 8th: For a day of fun, we left at 5:30 am for Cagayan De Oro to spend the morning whitewater rafting with the kids that had graduated, i.e., to join in the party. We endured some shopping thereafter, and I soon realized that no one sold a T-shirt that would fit an American my size. Also had to endure being in Daniel's shadow, as many Filipinos thought he was Justin Bieber, who was scheduled to have a series of concerts in that country in May. We treated the kids to dinner out to complete their day.



Saturday, April 9th: Today we traveled with the CH kids and watched how as Jesus' disciples they could minister in song, testimony and the sharing of the Word to those incarcerated. We also helped pass out food, as over there, if families or friends do not bring meals, the inmates don't eat. Not what I've seen in the jails I have visited, for sure. The "kid's" prison had a front row that looked like one of my youngest Little League teams in days gone by....No kidding. The youngest ones had to be under 10 years old. They are housed with the older mental health commitments, so the whole scene is gut-wrenching. As a team, we were honored to be with the CH kids and were blown away by their service example to the "least of these".

Sunday, April 10th: Church started at 8:30 with about 45 minutes of singing. Then Jason spoke on being a prisoner with Pastor Jun, a minister as well as CH houseparent, translating. Most locals gather more in their native tongue, even if they do catch most English we speak. We had an early feast with the kids, once again being honored to the point of embarrassment, and we exchanged gifts with them before heading to the airport to reverse our travel process. The flight from Manila left at 6am the next morning and thanks to the recapture of the 12 time zones we lost, our 17 hours of travel allowed us to land in Detroit before noon the same day. I left out much detail, but still wanted to have you all have a chance to read what a trip like this is all about. Want to serve the Lord and have a much better view of how God is at work everywhere in the world? No problem. Just go yourself next time. You won't regret it....

"A new niece in the Philippines"



I have a lovely daughter who had wished to go on a mission trip for a very long time. This daughter also is a senior in high school this year, so, when the opportunity came along for a group from our church to visit the Philippines, I knew that I needed to fervently pray and consider letting her go.

I spotted Shane on the balcony of the girls' cottage early the next morning and could sense a sweet, sensitive, beautiful spirit. I connected with her right away. (I would learn days later that Jane prayerfully considered which team member to pair up with which college student weeks before and had chosen to pair us together.) I talked to her for awhile and then asked how I could pray for her. Shane then asked me, "Have you heard about my illness?" I would learn that Shane four years earlier had undergone intense surgery in an attempt to cure her bone cancer. She also had undergone chemotherapy and endured a difficult year long recovery. I could hardly believe my ears. Six years earlier I had endured a 9 1/2 hour intense surgery to remove colon cancer and at the same time had a hysterectomy. I also had an intense year long recovery.

Through both of our illnesses we know that God was with us all the time and that He gave us the strength to get through each day and make a full recovery. We are both doing well and agreed to always pray for each other, especially to remain cancer free.

Shane calls me Auntie. I am honored to be a small part of her life. She is a beautiful, God-filled young lady and I am certain that she is one of many reasons God sent me to the Philippines.

Cindy Whitley
Walloon Lake Community Church

It was two weeks before the deadline, after doing morning devotions and getting ready for work, the Lord made it crystal clear that not only was she to go, but that I was to go with her! I honestly tried to wrestle with God reasoning that this was not my wish at all. (I have a deep love for children, but have always felt there were so many that need love right here where I live.) I knew at that moment that we were to be part of the team to travel more than halfway around the world. I had a huge sense of peace immediately even though this was so much bigger than we were. God provided the financial support and the prayerful support to get us there.

We arrived at Christians' Haven's College house to be greeted by hand-made leis, fancy coconut drinks, and beautiful love-filled young adults.

It was a wonderful evening; however, I would not get to meet my "student" until later.