

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Fiji



WHAT'S INSIDE?

- 02 Editor's Notes
- 03 PRO volunteer: Speech Therapist
- 04 Conservation – 'Navua River Clean up'
- 05 Project Updates - Nutrition
- 06 Westcose Games – Special Need's Sports Day
- 07 Dirty Day/Staff Visit

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ProjectsAbroad

Bula everybody!

September has been a busy month for Projects Abroad Fiji. We have had a lovely visit from one of our international team, Ligaya Basalo from Sri Lanka, who took part marching with all our school partners for the opening of the Special Need's Schools Westcose Games,. We also had a professional speech therapist work with us at the Nadi Centre for Special Education, and our nutrition volunteers began their exercise programme at a local school!

It has indeed been a nonstop month and we are looking forward to a fantastic summer with more amazing volunteers. As always, we have had to say some sad goodbyes to those who left Fiji in September. We can only wish the volunteers the very best and hope that they will return to our shores soon.

On this note, we hope you enjoy this September issue of our newsletter.

Vinaka

Karishma Nandan



Read on to hear all about the Conservation Volunteers Dirty Day.....SAVE OUR SHARKS!!

PRO VOLUNTEER: – Speech Therapist – Karin Simma

Karin Simma is a Swedish Volunteer, who graduated back in 2011 and who has worked as a speech therapist for nearly 4 years. Her main motivation behind this interest is her love for children. However, her first job involved working with adult stroke patients, traumatic brain injuries and neurological disorders. After this bit of experience, her love for children never ceased so she decided to take a sabbatical and travel abroad to work with children. Karin says that she finds it much more rewarding to work as a Volunteer in a country like Fiji where her skills are greatly needed!

Her work at Nadi Centre for Special Education has involved talking with teachers and meeting individual students to identify their problems. She then discussed strategies with the teachers that would help the students to improve their speech and language. Karin has started up a speech group with Aaron So, another Projects Abroad volunteer from Canada, to continue the work she has done at the school with the teachers.

Karin's greatest challenge was that the children spoke two languages (their mother tongue and English), which made it difficult for her to know if the children were faced with primary speech, language/speech or second language problems. The second obstacle to overcome was the cultural difference of how Fijian children learnt better in a group than on a one-to-one basis as in Sweden. In spite of these challenges, Karin has had a good experience and really admires how her students at the Nadi Centre for Special Education motivated themselves to attend her speech therapy classes.

Karin has started assessments and strategies to launch the Speech Therapy Program at the school, along with running a workshop for the teachers to highlight the work needed.

Her advice to future volunteers is to use a lot of pictures or objects when teaching the children, and to be open to each individual child's capabilities. Karin went on to say that it can be hard work but is very rewarding!



PRO volunteer, speech therapist Karin Simma conducted a workshop for the teachers at her placement, Nadi Centre for Special Education, to share her experiences and knowledge.

CONSERVATION – NAVUA RIVER CLEAN UP

VOLUNTEER STORY – CLOEE MANGELSON (USA)

For this particular dirty day, we all split up and went to different areas of the Navua River. My group went to the mouth and cleaned up the river bank. My job was to record all the trash we picked up and the others in my group would count it and tell me what they had collected. Some of the most common things we collected were plastic or glass bottles, diapers, food wrappers, and appliances like televisions or stereos. In some places, there would be too much trash for us to pick up because the locals had dedicated trash dumps on the side of the river. We burned what we could and picked up the rest. By the end of the day, we had filled 4 boats full of trash that we took to the dump.

When the community sees us on the side of the road picking up trash, we are showing them that we do care. We are trying to make Fiji a more beautiful place to live; one piece of trash at a time. It means throwing away garbage in a garbage can instead of on the road or in the river. By doing that, we are keeping the trash out of the mangroves so that they can grow. Mangroves in the rivers are important to sharks because that's where the pregnant females go to give birth. If there aren't any mangroves then the baby sharks are more likely to die. Sharks have a low reproductive rate, which means that they only reproduce once every two or three years. They also take a long time to reach sexual maturity. If we don't give them a chance, we are going to lose them and that would be detrimental to the ocean's ecosystem.

Some studies have shown that dead sharks have consumed all kinds of trash. Scientists have found bottle caps, plastic bags and pieces of metal. In such cases, it actually caused the shark's death. This just shows us the effect we have on the oceans. If sharks are consuming trash then we know we are polluting to a terrible degree.

Part of our role as a volunteer with Projects Abroad is to educate the community on how they can protect sharks. One thing that we do is go to schools and teach the kids about how important sharks are. We play games and sing songs about sharks and, as a result, the children learn that sharks are really cool! This is one of the most important things we do because educating kids will have an impact on the future. If we can change a child's perspective, they will grow up with a renewed mindset and who knows the effect they could have.



Conservation volunteers doing an excellent job of cleaning up the Navua river banks



Even old computers were found in the river!



The volunteers were all smiles when they tallied up how much rubbish they had collected!

VOLUNTEER STORY – NUTRITION

“NAMAKA PUBLIC SCHOOL EXERCISE PROGRAMME”

Before starting the first day of the group exercise classes at the Namaka Public School, I was in a rather poor mood. It was just one of those days where everything was going wrong. However, my day took a dramatic turn-around as soon as the exercise class began.

The energy that the female teachers exhibited, as well as the fun and laughter that they carried through the training session, was amazing. Not to mention their excitement when they finished the class! On that first day, the Namaka Public School teachers demonstrated their enthusiasm and motivation to improve their health. With regards to facilitating behavior changes, specifically those concerning health, nothing determines success like motivation, and the teachers most certainly were motivated to get strong and healthy!

In the four weeks of training, their energy has never wavered; even after the muscle ache that set in at the start. Four days a week, the teachers come together to jump, squat, lunge and sweat, and their progress is evident! Weight is being lost and strength, both physically and personally, is being gained.

It is very possible that in the near future, if the teachers continue to push themselves and adhere to the Kana Vinaka Challenge, Namaka Public School could become the healthiest school in Fiji!

THOMAS (TED) ANDREWS
NUTRITION PROJECT – 12 WEEKS
USA



Nutrition volunteers: Sarah (Germany), Ted & Sean (USA)



Namaka Public School teachers getting fit with Ted's help



Using weights made from bottles and sand is cheap and easy!

SPECIAL SCHOOLS – 'WESTCOSE GAMES'

NADI VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT THE WESTERN SPECIAL NEED'S SCHOOLS!

Projects Abroad Fiji was invited by our partners at the Special Schools to take part in the opening ceremony of their annual Westcose games, which was held in Nadi this year. Our volunteers also took part in this event, which proved how well they had integrated with the students and teachers of their schools.

Our volunteers - Joppe van Leewan, Karin Simma, Anna Lam, Irene van Uden, Martine Tangenes, Sophie Berger, Astri Stautland, Tina Brimi and Kerstin Schall all turned up to support and cheer for their students during the games.

It was a great day, made even more special by one of our talented high school marching bands, which performed at the opening ceremony. It was truly an honor to be there with the wonderful teachers, students and volunteers.



Projects Abroad volunteers cheer from the stands with handmade posters at the ready to encourage the participants!

Dirty Day – Ratu Navula College

Projects Abroad Volunteers and staff gathered at Ratu Navula College to finish painting the blackboards. Our volunteers did an amazing job and had lots of fun with the group.

Mr Setareki Merekula, the principal of Ratu Navula, expressed his appreciation to the team at Projects Abroad for the help that was given thanks to our dirty day. He mentions that the help was perfectly timed as a new term is about to start and it has been more than 5 years since the blackboards were last given a fresh coat of paint.

We painted 28 blackboards, which will be a big help for the students in years to come.



Past volunteer Serge Fourquet (France) with one of the Ratu Navula College rugby teams.

Overseas staff says “Bula” to Fiji

Ligaya Basalo, an operations manager from Projects Abroad, came from Sri Lanka to visit us and see our projects. She came with a gregarious personality and a wealth of experience with our organization.

Ligaya spent her time visiting our placements in Lautoka, Nadi and Pacific Harbour and also meeting our hardworking volunteers.

It was a great pleasure to have her here and we hope to see Ligaya visiting our shores again soon.

Vinaka!



Ligaya receiving a traditional Fijian welcome in Pacific Harbour