

Ami Multami, '01
Manila, Philippines

Jen McNamara, Melissa Moore and I worked for six weeks in Manila with the Missionaries of Charity at "The Home of joy for the Sick Children." Manila is a densely populated city and we stayed in Tondo, perhaps the most economically depressed section of the city. Watching skyscrapers turn into tin roof shacks with aluminum siding and the well-dressed turn into barely clothed on our initial drive from Manila to Tondo was very humbling.



Experiences such as this were an important element of truly realizing and appreciating what we have. We spent most days caring (i.e. feeding, bathing, clothing, and changing) for the handicapped children and abandoned babies. The children had a range of health problems ranging from TB, seizures, hydrocephalus, cretinism, worms, infections, and malnutrition. Working with the severely handicapped was a new experience for me and although I was nervous at first, the sisters were very

encouraging. In seeing their devotion to the children, I was reminded of Mother Theresa's legacy of giving each person a little love before they die.

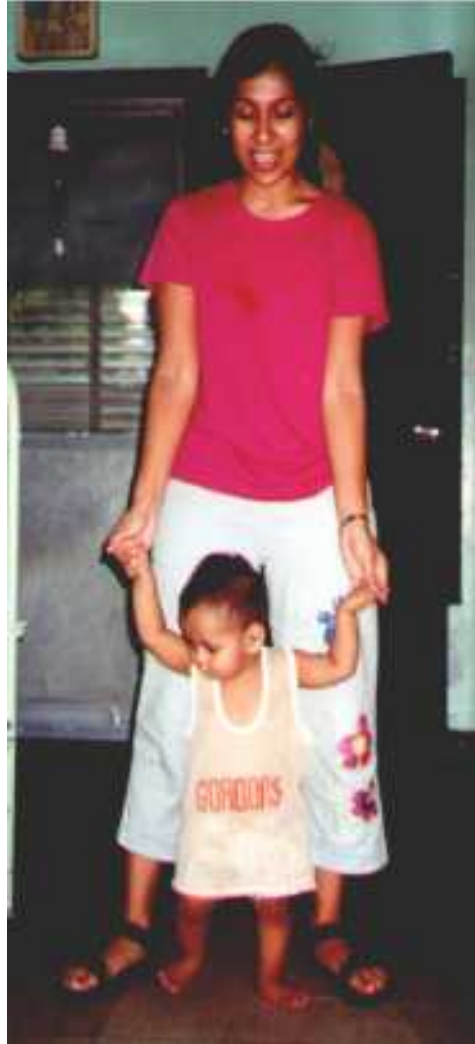
The clinic was a fairly simple facility - two faucets for for running water, a kitchen, a room for the babies and two more rooms full of cribs for disabled children. The "staff" was composed primarily of the sisters, three or four volunteers, and one physician who visited once every two weeks. there were also very stringent rules regarding the adoption of children to ensure that they were going to loving families and not being sold as indentured servents.



Despite possessing few of what we consider to be the essentials in life (running water, food, stove, etc), there was never an insufficient amount of service or love. Many of the children greeted us each morning bursting with stories, chatting away in Tagalog. For the most part it did not matter that

there was no verbal understanding, we still shared a connection. The children always possessed smiles despite the challenges they were faced with, they wanted nothing more than love and affection. It was those smiles that helped us overcome our hardships and kept us going through the entire trip.





I learned so much about myself and how to stretch my limitations. Although many of the volunteers were a little hesitant to speak to us at first, we ended up making many friends. We met so many wonderful people who reminded us of the warmth and sincerity the people share. It is difficult to express the immense joy and satisfaction of slowly seeing the kids grow stronger, and chubbier, each day. Despite our various difficulties, we each gained a sense of compassion that we will always carry with us. Even now when I think back about my time in Tondo, I can still hear the laughter of the children and see the smiles on their adorable faces. My summer of service really left me with a better understanding of myself as well as a better sense of the meaning of humanity, dedication, and compassion.