

Safe Passage –Fall 2006 Newsletter

Reflections from Kevin Fernandez: Two years of Service

After 22 months of working as Volunteer Coordinator at Safe Passage, I can say, "I have had the time of my life." It was a great experience, one of challenge, happiness, sadness, achievement, friendships, admiration and disappointment, all rolled into a time period that can only be described as "exciting."

"Challenge," when there is so much to do with so little resources. The amount of work that is required to keep the program running is substantial and there are barriers, some accidental, some natural, that seem to conveniently get in your way. Remaining calm and



problem solving are valuable skills to have. "Happiness," when you see the big smiles of the children who have so little and benefit from efforts of staff and volunteers, who bring skills, knowledge and opportunities to share with them. "Sadness," when sometimes you know too much about the backgrounds of the children and the troubles they face on a day-to-day basis. "Achievement," when you see numerous educational and building projects start and finish, and being able to see the children and their families benefit from these projects such as the medical clinic, computer lab, English program, adult literacy, new early intervention center complete with furniture and landscaping. "Friendships" built with the staff, families, children and volunteers of Safe Passage. "Admiration" for people who have given so much of their lives to helping the families of Safe Passage and for people who have made such a great effort to raise awareness of what happens here, to gain continual support for the project.

"Disappointment" that I have to go back to the "real world" to get a "real job" (i.e. I have to wear a business shirt and tie, nice pants and shave every day!!!)

However, all said and done, I have every confidence that Safe Passage will carry on and be successful, thanks to the effort of many of you who read this newsletter. I wish everyone at Safe Passage all the best and hope to return one day to see the progress. I will be thinking of you all from the Land Down Under. Thank you all for a most memorable experience.

Adios Amigos (See ya later, mates)

Kevin Fernandez

Community Garden

This past June, 15 Master's level landscape design students from Washington University in Seattle came to Safe Passage to design and develop a community garden at our new early intervention and vocational training center. Under the direction of Professor Daniel Winterbottom, the students presented several designs and then implemented the final design for phase one of the creation of the community garden. For five weeks the students worked diligently, digging through layers of garbage, hitting water pipes, and working through mud. The result is a beautiful garden for both the children and their families to enjoy! Winterbottom expressed "I think it's critical that every child have a nurturing, healthy and inspired childhood. Without that the chance of becoming a productive, confident adult is put at risk. For these children much of their childhood has been stripped and it is our hope that through this garden some of that childhood and some of that pain and loss can be repaired. So much is learned through a child's curiosity. A simple investigation through nature can lead to significant realizations and foster a stronger curiosity for knowledge."



Did you Know?

Safe Passage hosted 29 service teams from Nov 05-Aug 05, which equaled nearly 350 volunteers!

Safe Passage is only 6 ½ years old!

Safe Passage serves 513 lunches and 1,026 snacks each day at the educational reinforcement center.

530 children are seen at the Safe Passage clinic each month (includes Safe Passage children and their family members).

There are currently 16 long term volunteers (committed to twelve months or longer) serving Safe Passage

A Note from the Director

I had the privilege of giving the commencement address this year at the Millbrook Academy in Millbrook NY at the invitation of a group of seniors who had volunteered at Safe Passage. It is with great pride that I thank them and all of you for making a difference in the lives of the children through your ongoing presence, caring and support.

Thank you!

Hanley Denning
Founding Director, Safe Passage

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