

LAKE PLACID NEWS

ROTARY CLUB NEWS: Work, play, give in Southeast Asia



Group shot, SOS Children's Village, Cebu City, Philippines (Photo provided)

For the past four years, I've traveled to Southeast Asia with a group near and dear to my heart.

Together We Can Change the World (TWCCTW) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the well-being of disadvantaged children and abused and trafficked women in Southeast Asia.

We offer both funding and professional skills to carefully vetted organizations to provide education and job-skills training with the aim to enable recipients to achieve independent, self-sustaining lives.

Currently, we work with projects in Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, Malaysia and the Philippines.

The allure and what drew me to become involved were benefits that make this group unique.

Since the group is comprised of professional speakers and trainers from around the world, we contribute our greatest skill and talent-our speaking and training skills. We do not speak to the non-profit groups we support such as schools, group homes, women's shelters, HIV care facilities; rather, we produce public seminars in the major cities for local business people and our hotel sponsors.

The people we meet and the parts of the countries we see are not what you would normally experience on a regular tour. We see how people live in villages, how they farm, how schools are set up. We get to know the locals through our repeat visits to the projects we support.

In addition to paying our own airfare and travel expenses, we are required to raise \$1,500. This money goes to the groups we serve and support.

Why do we do it? Why take two weeks from busy schedules, plus raise funds and pay our own expenses? Because we want to give back at a higher level. While most of us are involved in charity work in our own countries, the experiences we have with the groups we serve are like no other. We see how the people live. We see how the kids are educated. We see their poverty and struggles, ones that we are unlikely to experience in our hometowns. We know we make a difference.

In January, we traveled to the Philippines and spent time in both Cebu and Manila. One of our favorite projects is the SOS Children's Village in Cebu City. This is a family-based care program that provides a home for orphaned children or ones who cannot be raised in their own family due to abuse or immense poverty.

As well as being entertained by the children, we showered them with educational materials and most importantly stickers, which they absolutely adore.

We visited a few of the small homes on the property, which house up to 12 children and two house mothers. The purpose is to give the children as much of a caring family environment as possible.

This year, the Lake Placid Rotary Club generously donated \$500 to this project. A group of the children made a short "thank you" video to show their gratitude for the donation.

The Rotary Club of Lake Placid is part of a global network of 1.2 million people who come together to make positive, lasting change in communities locally, nationally and internationally.

The Club meets every Thursday at 7:20 a.m. at the Marriott Courtyard.
