

LONG SERVICE LEAVE, ANZAC BISCUITS AND VOLUNTEER WORK

David Kraft, University of South Australia

David.Kraft@unisa.edu.au

What does my topic have to do with my work as a Lab technician in the School of Pharmacy & Medical Sciences?

I am not going to talk about my work but how it has supported my volunteer work.

10 years ago, after working for about 35 years, I had accumulated over 200 days in long service leave.

I was asked by the Head of School to come up with a plan to use some up.

My wife and I had been thinking about volunteer work overseas, as part of our travels. We wanted to give something back. Starting in 2007 I took 3-5 weeks a year to work on a volunteer project and have a holiday in that country or a neighbouring one.

In 2007 my family (Wife & 2 daughters) went to Fiji with a Habitat for Humanity house building team.

We needed to raise a few thousand dollars between us as a donation towards the project.

The idea of making and selling Anzac biscuits came about because they are easy and inexpensive to make and it was in April so it became a marketing strategy selling biscuits ready for Anzac Day.

At work I advertised in the School Bulletin & put order forms in the Offices & Tea Rooms.

I got busy baking and my wife & daughters packaged the biscuits and assisted in selling them.

Apart from me selling to work colleagues they were also sold at Jenny's work, the girl's Ballet School, to Neighbours and at the Church we attend.

That year we sold 222 packets of 12 biscuits, with my work colleagues buying 64. Over the ten projects my work colleagues have bought over 1,300 packets raising approx \$3,000 and overall over 3,000 packets have been sold raising over \$10,000.

All the donations have directly supported the projects – We covered all our travel & accommodation costs.

Of the 10 projects – 5 have been in Cambodia, 3 in Zimbabwe, 2 in Thailand & 1 in Fiji. This includes a combined Cambodia / Thailand trip.

Background info on each Organisation we worked through.

All are Christian based, which reflects our desire to serve others, especially those less privileged.

Habitat for Humanity  habitat.org.au

Vision – A world where everyone has a safe & decent place to live. They primarily provide affordable housing for poor families but have also been involved in disaster relief.

Habitat is based in America & has branches in many parts of the world, including Australia & Adelaide.

Destiny Rescue  DestinyRescue.org

Destiny Rescue was started by an Australian. It rescues children from sexual exploitation & human trafficking.

They currently operate in 5 countries: Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Philippines & India.

A.C.T.S (African Christian Tour Service)  actsafrica.com

Facilitates & arranges Christian Volunteer Projects in Africa.

African Impact - (Motto: Explore, Inspire, Impact)  africaimpact.com

Provide volunteer projects & internships which make a long term positive change to communities & conservation.

Vana Childcare Ministries  vana.org.au

This is an Australian based Charity & Organisation supporting Orphans & Vulnerable Children in Zimbabwe.

Phlas Prei Centre (Transformation) Cambodia

Originally set up through an organisation called Asia Focus Australia - asiafocus.org.au

The founder & President is a Lutheran pastor from QLD.

The centre is now run by a Board headed by Lois & Pastor Roger Whittle from Adelaide. It provides lodging and educational support for years 9 -12 girls from poor families in remote villages.

I will now give a brief overview of each project. They are mainly in chronological order.

Fiji 2007 – This was a single house building project with Habitat for Humanity for a family in Kulen Village on the outskirts of the capital Suva. We were part of a team from Australia led by a person who put us onto our most recent project in Zimbabwe.

Cambodia 2008, 2012 & 2015

On these visits we were a part of teams from Australia visiting a Girls' hostel called Plas Prei Centre in the northern part of Cambodia in a town called Preah Vihea. This hostel is overseen by an Adelaide couple Lois & Roger Whittall – Lois is a lecturer at Adelaide University and frequently travels to Singapore for teaching so goes onto Cambodia while there. This hostel houses girl's selected from poor families who have educational potential. It gives them an opportunity to further their education, which is not usually possible, and make an impact in their villages. Many want become teachers or nurses. They are sponsored through this time. Our time was divided between maintenance, storytelling, playing games, cooking and craft activities. Visits were made to families in their villages and also Schools and orphanages. We also visited the Genocide Museum & Centre to get a perspective on what happened in the Pol Pot era.

Cambodia 2009 – We were part of a Habitat team building a cluster of 12 houses near the capital Phnom Penh.

The land had been donated by an Adelaide couple Paul & Aileen Munn (Paul is known to locals as "the lawn man.") He was also there helping. The houses were being built for people who were being relocated from the Phnom Penh rubbish

dump, as it was being closed down. We had heard about this dump where people lived & scavenged and had visited it the year before when there on another project.

This was part of a wider initiative called the Jimmy Carter Mekong build. At the same time there were teams working in 4 neighbouring countries through which the Mekong flows. The project we were working on consisted of a multinational team with small groups assigned to each house.

Zimbabwe 2010, 2011

In 2010 & 11 we were working through 2 organisations. One called "African Impact" & the other A.C.T.S

We were involved with 3 orphanages- Father's House, Danai & St Joseph's Boys School & Home.

These children may or may not have parents – some are called economic orphans as the parents cannot afford to care for them. They are from families who have HIV/AIDS & many of the children are affected.

Cambodia 2012 – See above.

Thailand 2013 – Four years later we did another Habitat house build - This time in Thailand a village near Chiang Mai.

Cambodia / Thailand 2014

Two years ago we (youngest daughter & ballet friend included) went on a trip to Cambodia & Thailand with an organisation called Destiny Rescue.

This organisation was established by an Australian man (Tony Kirwan an electrical contractor from Cairns)

It is aimed at rescuing children from sexual exploitation and human trafficking. We toured a red light district in Bangkok to see firsthand where girls were being lured.

Since 2011 over 1,400 children have been rescued.

We mainly were there as observers to see how the operation works & to promote Destiny Rescue & consider sponsoring a child.

Cambodia 2015 – See above.

Zimbabwe 2016 - We were involved with Good Shepherd Centre (Orphanage) in Chinhoyi 100km NE of Zimbabwe's capital Harare.

Technicians Volunteer Day 2016

In September I organised through Habitat for a team of Technicians from my school (Pharmacy & Medical Sciences) to be involved in a clean-up on a property affected by the Pinery bushfires just over a year ago. There were 10 technicians and four others on the team. The school supported this by allowing us to do it as a normal work day and provided a bus. (the driver was one of our technicians)