

Les & Deb's International Aid and Development Update

April 2015

Philippines Project: Tacloban Swimming Program (March 2015)

Thank you to all of those who assisted Deb & I with the 4 day swim school program held over 2 weekends in March 2015. By all reports the event was a big success. We witnessed first hand how the children were at first still apprehensive about the water but by the 4th day the kids were more confident and actually began to enjoy swimming like kids should.

Some of kids could still be carrying dark memories of Typhoon Yolanda which devastated the area in 2014. A few of them needed a comforting cuddle at times. Hopefully though we have assisted in making those thoughts a thing of the past. Their new swimming skills will help them journey through life.

Special recognition

Firstly a big thank you to the awesome team at [Volunteer For the Visayans](#) in assisting us (with a special mention to Crisel who organised the children, jeepney and found the swimming venue).

A sincere thank you goes out to the other international volunteers who gave up their much needed recharge on the weekends - your assistance was very much appreciated.

We very much appreciated the kind donation of 20 pairs of swimming goggles by [Elite Swimming](#) in Ascot Vale. These are being stored at VFV headquarters in Tacloban City for future swimming lessons.

[North Melbourne Football Club](#) also donated 20 members caps. These were distributed upon the conclusion of the 4 day event to the sponsored kids who attended the swim program. All the kids were very excited and proud to wear their new North Melbourne Kangaroos caps.

Participants

VFV carefully selected 18 of their younger sponsored Tacloban children to attend the swim program . Some of the VFV team not only assisted in and around the pool but also participated in a special adults class during each snack break. Also the other sponsored children that missed out this time will hopefully have a chance when we return in October 2015 & April 2016.



Some of the swimming participants outside VFV Tacloban HQ

Project Sponsors:

- ⇒ [Volunteer For the Visayans](#)
- ⇒ [Les & Debbie](#)

Project Donation Contributors:

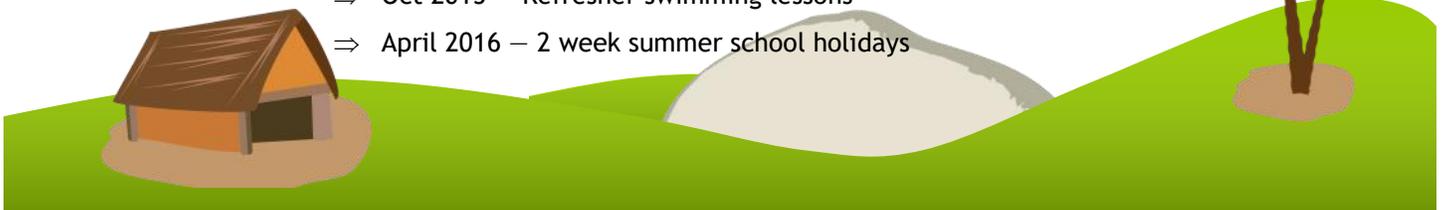
- ⇒ [Elite Swimming](#)
- ⇒ [North Melbourne Football Club](#)
- ⇒ [Clemenger International – Port Melbourne Staff](#)

Other Contributors:

- ⇒ [Steel Blue Footwear](#)

Upcoming Proposed Key Dates:

- ⇒ Oct 2015 – Refresher swimming lessons
- ⇒ April 2016 – 2 week summer school holidays



Venue

Choosing a venue to hold the swimming classes isn't an easy task in Tacloban City. VFV negotiated with a local hotel (Leyte Park Resort) for use of their guest swimming pool for the 4 days. The cost was per head and came to a total of 12,000 peso (A\$355). VFV initially secured special funding to cover this cost but we decided that the 12,000 peso could be distributed in other ways within the wonderful VFV projects (i.e. nutrition program). We decided to cover the venue cost this time and will attempt to secure some international sponsors for next time.

Group structure

The children were split into groups of 6. When it was their turn for a lesson they were all eager to learn. We discovered some really good natural swimmers. Some of our local Tacloban friends even commented that one day it would be great to see some water sport champions (maybe they will even get that local water polo team to take on the Americans one day). Oh, almost forgot to mention the fun times when the kids didn't have lessons - it was all about having fun and being safe in the water. Fun games kept everyone entertained!

After swimming snack time

At the end of each day the kids were treated to some peanut butter sandwiches and sweet snacks. The two loaves of bread turned into four by the end of the program. The cost of these snacks were ultimately covered by the \$55 raised at work ([Clemenger International Freight](#) Port Melbourne office) during the February healthy snacks pilot program. Actually the \$55 stretched further to also allow us to supply sunscreen protection for the kids. Many thanks to the majority of CIF staff that participated in the CIF Healthy Snacks pilot program.

Transportation

The jeepney ride back to VFV headquarters was always full of exhausted sleeping kids. If only we could tap into those dreams....

Where to next?

Next step is to return back to Tacloban City this October to continue with some further lessons. During this visit we ideally would like to train a local VFV team member to become a support instructor. This support will become invaluable when we return next April for a week long summer vacation swim program for the sponsored children which will be incorporated in the school holidays. This will enable the children to benefit with a 5 consecutive day program. Our next visit will concentrate on smaller groups with more emphasis on stroke techniques and a more intense water safety element will also be included.

Like to help somehow?

Feel free to contact us if you would like to offer support of any kind (refer to details on last page). Ideally we would like to remove all swimming lesson project costs for VFV so that they can focus on another great job of pre-event coordinating. We aim to cover not only the venue, equipment & lunch costs but also the transportation if we can. Any support will be greatly appreciated by all as Deb & I can't do it all alone.

***“Alone we can do so little
but together we can do so
much.”***

- Helen Keller



Event photos that really do all the talking:



Before we enter the pool, it's time for sunscreen protection...



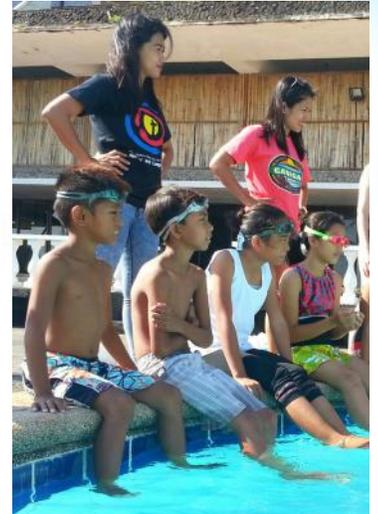
Now three simple rules. Firstly, listen...



Splash time



Is it swim time yet?



Yes that goes for the big kids too



Lets jump all over Les...



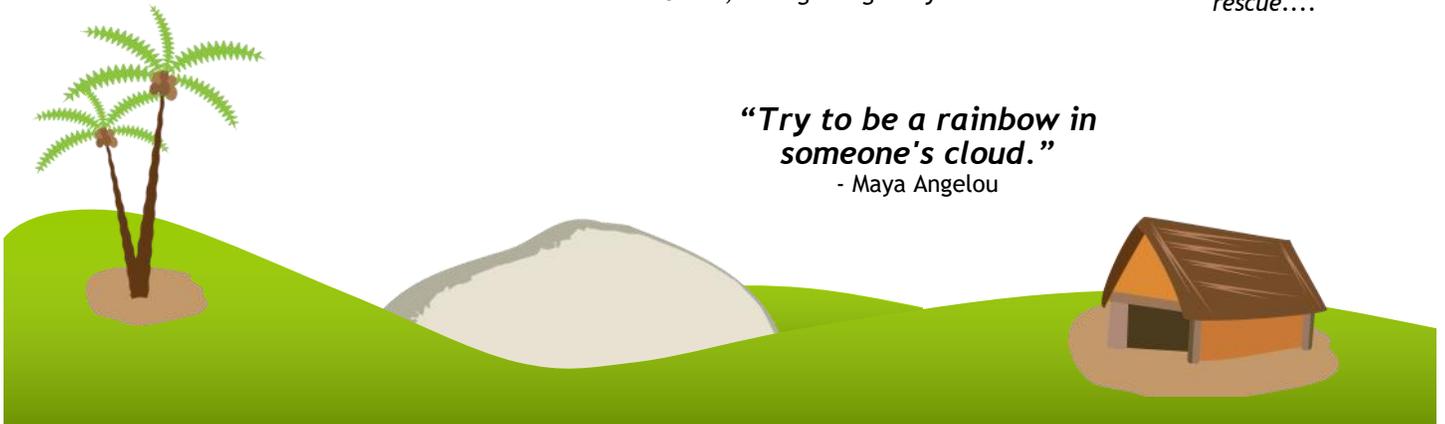
Oh no, he is getting away..



Only the Aussie Lifesaver needs help during this fun and laughter rescue....

"Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud."

- Maya Angelou

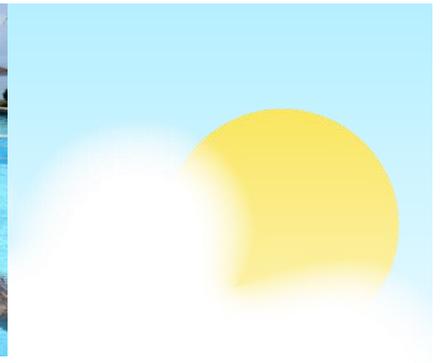




Head down on the side



Good technique



Arm over



Arms straight



Now kick



Well done



Lets race



Good listening



Yes you can do it...



End lesson smiles from the big kids



“Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about..”

- Wendy Mass

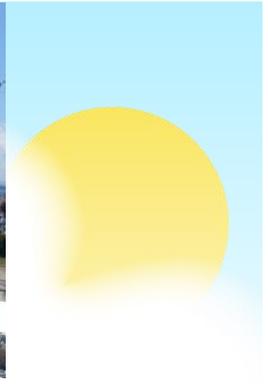




Two of the three groups



Lessons with a truly awesome view



15 months from Yolanda, Resort still damaged....



Thank you Elite Swimming for your kind donation of swimming goggles...



End of day nutrition.... Thank you CIF staff for putting up with Les's Healthy Snacks pilot program fundraiser.



Peanut butter, yum....



Home time already..

"The measure of who we are is what we do with what we have."

- Vince Lombardi

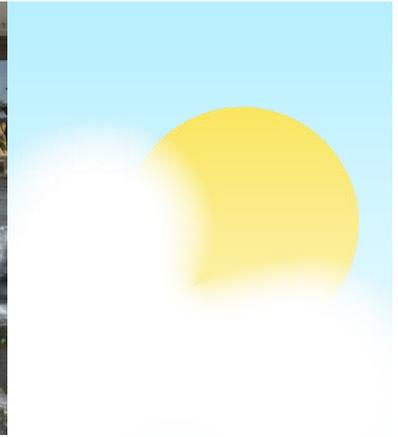




Fun time



Smile...



Journey home, sleep time



More sleep time



Mr Jeepney driver, are we home yet?



North Melbourne Kangaroos are number 1 - Thanks!



A big high five thank you....

**"Kindness in words creates confidence.
Kindness in thinking creates profoundness.
Kindness in giving creates love."**

- Lao Tzu



Thank you to these wonderful organisations for their kind contributions to “Make A Difference” within the local communities of Leyte, Philippines:



Volunteer For the Visayans (VFV) information & links:

Volunteer for the Visayans (VFV), is a registered non-profit, non-government organization located in Tacloban City, Philippines. It is registered with the local Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to distribute planned and professional social welfare services to assist underprivileged and undeserved local communities.

VFV has dedicated itself to contributing towards sustainable developments in the areas of child welfare, community development, education and public health through its broad based social welfare programs. In particular VFV has invested time and resources to develop a number of long term [Community Projects](#) as well as a comprehensive [Child Sponsorship Program](#) which combined have led to over 150 children from disadvantaged backgrounds to have the means to go to school and pursue mainstream education.

Also VFV's focus has recently switched to emergency rebuilding due to Typhoon Ruby a couple of months ago which also followed Super Typhoon Yolanda late 2013. Yolanda destroyed 70 to 80% of the structures in its path on Leyte province. An estimated 10,000 people died and up to 620,000 people were displaced across the region. There are still approx 500 families living in emergency aid tents & thousands of families in emergency shelters as they have no means of rebuilding their destroyed family homes. We saw this first hand on recent trips to Tacloban.

For further information feel free to check out their Facebook page www.facebook.com/volunteerforthevisayans , Twitter www.twitter.com/visayans, YouTube videos www.youtube.com/user/volunteerforvisayans or website: www.visayans.org

If you have any questions or offers of support kindly contact Les Treacy on:

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“No matter what people tell you, words and ideas can change the world.”

- Robin Williams

