



Projects Abroad™

The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad

Sri Lanka



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EXPERIENCE SRI LANKA

2012 January

| Issue no 82

THE LAND LIKE NO OTHER

From culture shock and homesickness to one of the best times of my life...

My journey to Sri Lanka is my first big adventure on my own. I've never been so far away from home or my family and a cancelled flight is not really the best start for something like this. So I arrived in Sri Lanka later than expected, tired but happy to be here.

I didn't expect to get homesick but I did during the first few days and the heat and all the new impressions played their part too.

So here are my tips for all volunteers who are like me, and how you should spend your first week.

I love spicy food and rice, so I'm enjoying the good food in my host family. Try Dhal, Hoppers, Rotti and all the curry.

I am looking forward to my medicine study in April, so I'm trying to be curious and learn as much as possible in my placement.

Don't forget that you are on an island that is described as the paradise of beaches in all travel books. Go to the beach and swim in the Indian Ocean (first time for me).

And now to the most important point: THE PEOPLE!!

I think that it is okay to call home during the first (two) days (my mum knows me the best, so she was a real help).

But make sure you get to know your host family and meet all the other volunteers nearby. They have been here for longer and have the same reasons to be here like you; after two weeks it's like I've known them for months.

For most of you all this sounds like the most normal thing and that there is no need to talk about it, but there might be some who know what I'm talking about.

I'm so glad I'm here and I'm looking forward to six more weeks full of sun, a new culture and, most importantly, experiences that will stay with me for life.

I will see baby Elephants, Kandy dancers, Adam's Peak, waterfalls and tea plantations, go on safari, enjoy afternoons at the beach with the others, have some more tuk tuk and bus drives, take more beautiful photos, eat more curry, drink more mango juice and just "have one of the best times of my life".

Enjoy Sri Lanka,

Natascha Kebben

Country Director's Message



First of all let me wish all staff, colleagues and volunteers all around the world a very happy 2012. Let this year start with lots of good health and happiness for you and all your families. A very big thank you to the team in Sri Lanka and the overseas staff for all their support.

January is an important time in the Tamil Calendar, Thai Pongal which falls on 14th or 15th is called the Harvest Festival - a traditional occasion for giving thanks to nature, for celebrating the life Cycles that gives us grain.

The outreach will be at the Anula Wijerama Orphanage in Balapitiya and the day will be spent painting and cleaning followed by the get together at Bentota.

The medical seminar is conducted by Dr. Sunil Fonseka and the topics for this month will be on Diabetics and Malaria.

The medical camp will be at the Parana Sri Ramaniya Rama temple in Bentota and all Medical volunteers' participation will be appreciated.

Last of all I would like to welcome all the volunteers who will be joining us soon. I hope all of you will have great experiences in Sri Lanka.

Shyamalee Wijesinghe
Country Director
Sri Lanka

My first month in Sri Lanka

It has only been a couple of weeks since I arrived in Colombo, and already now I feel I've experienced so much!

From visiting the little local temple near Karapitiya with my host dad Mr. Dombagalle, to see the big Temple of Truth in Kandy with the other Projects Abroad volunteers.

From riding the local "tuk tuk" through the packed streets of Galle, to taking the train from Colombo to Kandy and watching the mesmerizing landscapes of Sri Lanka, the deep valleys in the hills and the mighty rivers beneath the bridges.

And then there are the beaches; the first beach I visited was the little Unawatuna beach, just a few kilometers away from Galle centrum. I remember what I had been told from home, "Sri Lanka is the country with the Bounty Beaches", and that is exactly what I thought at Unawatuna. However, I had no idea that this beach wasn't even close to the really good beaches in Sri Lanka. The next weekend we visited the beach called Mirissa and this was really a worthy beach and the real owner of the title "Bounty beach". This soft and golden sand beach with overhanging palm trees is really a place that is worth a visit, and the water temperature is just perfect, however, the waves can be a bit aggressive if you don't watch out!

My first department on Karapitiya hospital, the ETU, could be described as: each day is never the same. I must admit I didn't expect so much "action" in the hospital, but the ETU has been covering that nicely. Every day brings new patients, theory and new interesting procedures to observe.

And I need to give many of the doctors on the ETU credit for using their precious time on us volunteers through discussing patient cases and showing procedures and techniques.

My first two weeks on the hospital have been wonderful so far, and this upcoming week I'm being moved over to the Neurosurgical department of Karapitiya, where I'll be attending brain and spine surgical procedures. My stay at the hospital of Karapitiya has only gotten more interesting with time.

Last weekend involved lots of interesting sightseeing in Kandy, which is really a wonderful city with a beautiful lake, which adds a nice atmosphere. However the distance between the city and Galle was a longer journey with bus and train rides. So when I finally arrived Sunday evening in Galle, and stepped through the gate to my local residence, I thought, "It's good to be home".

Welcomed by the smile of my host dad and 10 minutes later, being able to enjoy the wonderful home cooked Sri Lankan food, made by my host mom, was the perfect ending of an exciting weekend in Kandy. And the good sensation of actually feeling home said a lot about how good my family, here in Sri Lanka, have been at welcoming me into the family.

Thankfully, I still have more than three good months left in Sri Lanka.

By - Joachim Johansen

Hallo allemaal,

Ik ben Diana van Driel, 37 jaar en woon in Liempde een heel klein dorpje in Nederland. Ik werk alweer zeven jaar als Supply Chain Planner bij Bolsius, 's werelds grootste kaarsenfabriek. Ik doe mijn werk heel graag. Maar al van jongs af aan heb ik ook een enorme passie voor kinderen. Helaas heb ik zelf nooit kinderen gekregen. Wel heb ik zowat ieder weekend een logeetje, is het niet één van mijn neefjes of nichtjes, dan wel één van de kids van mijn vriendinnen. Hier geniet ik dan ook volop van! Maar mijn allergrootste vriend is Casper, mijn hond (zie foto hierbij).

Aangezien ik sinds 1,5 jaar weer single ben, wilde ik wat van de wereld gaan zien. Gekeken naar een single-reis, maar kwam er al snel achter dat dat niets is voor mij, dan voel ik me zo nutteloos. Aangezien mijn passie om voor kids te zorgen mij continue achtervolgt, besloot ik iets voor kinderen te gaan doen, gecombineerd met iets van de wereld zien. Na een avondje achter 'google' kwam ik al snel bij Projects Abroad uit. Nu een paar maanden later is het allemaal al werkelijkheid geworden.

26 februari vertrek ik voor één maand naar Sri Lanka, naar het plaatsje Balapitiya. Ik zal hier als vrijwilliger gaan werken in het Anula Wijerama Home for the Children. Hier zitten zo'n 40 meisjes in de leeftijd van 5 tot 19 jaar. Ik kijk er nu al naar uit om hun wat extra aandacht en zorg te geven. Ik zal met ze gaan spelen, verder zal ik ondersteuning geven bij de Engelse les, naailes, kookles en IT-les. Het is een bijzonder avontuur. Uiteraard vind ik het ook echt hartstikke spannend... Ik ben nog nooit eerder in mijn uppie zo ver van huis geweest. Maar ik heb ook al een foto gezien van mijn "gastmoeder", zij zag er zo lief en zorgzaam uit, dat ik er 100% vertrouwen in heb dat ik daar een super tijd tegemoet zal gaan.

Ondertussen heb ik een sponsoractie opgezet in het dorp en bij vrienden, collega's en mijn familie. Ik wil graag zo veel mogelijk geld inzamelen voor het weeshuis. Waarbij wel het doel is dat ikzelf de aanschaf doe, zodat ik later thuis ook kan laten zien aan de sponsors waar ik hun geld aan besteed heb.

Kortom ik denk dat ik een ervaring tegemoet zal gaan die ik nooit meer zal vergeten!!

Nog zes weken en dan stap ik in het vliegtuig, joehoe....

Groetjes en tot ziens in Sri Lanka,

Diana



My name is Maria Pasmiyah Hansen Lolle and I'll be volunteering from February 25 – May 23. After spending 3 weeks in July 2011 as a tourist in Sri Lanka visiting temples, orphanages, spice gardens, Sigiriya etc. it became clear to me that I wanted to go back and experience the country in another way. It was especially a very emotional visit at an orphanage in Colombo which made me sign up for the Care project approximately 5 months ago.

I'm 20 years old, but as my birthday is in February, I turn 21 a few weeks before I arrive in Sri Lanka. Presently I'm living in a tiny city called Vaeggerloese which is in the southern part of Denmark. I graduated from the Commercial School in the summer of 2011 and decided to take a year off before following my dream by studying Law at Copenhagen University. In the last couple of years I have become very fascinated by yoga and meditation and I hope to experience this part of the Sri Lankan culture. I'm going to work at the Anula Wijerama Home for the Children, which is located in Balapitiya near Galle in the Southern Province. This placement also gives a great opportunity to explore the surroundings such as the old town of Galle and its fortifications, the surfers' paradise of Hikkaduwa and beautiful water lagoons.

Like all other volunteers I have expectations for my journey to Sri Lanka. I hope that my love, knowledge and presence will make a difference for the children at the orphanage and somehow help to prepare them for the future. I also expect to give up my princess lifestyle and some of my habits, because I, as a future Law student, really need to see the real, unprotected world. It's probably going to be the greatest challenge in my life, but my family, boyfriend and friends understand why I have to do this, so I have their support.

Sri Lanka – I'll see you soon!



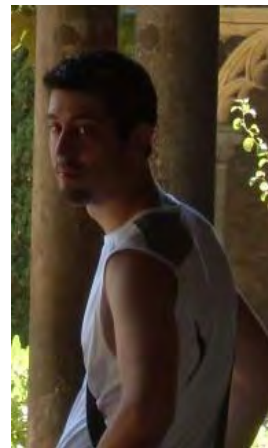
My name is Yohan, I'm 28 and I live in Toulouse, which is a nice city in the south of France.

I did all my studies in Paris and I moved 2 years ago to escape Parisian life. I've graduated and work at the 'CNES' which is the French spatial agency; assigned to a satellite control center I have to ensure that everything goes well and train people in IT knowledge, as I love to share and spend time with people. I also volunteer in a community centre that helps children after school with homework, organising games and teaching IT.

I have been thinking about volunteering for one year now, and I will be in Sri Lanka for the whole month of February. I'm really glad and I feel really lucky to have the chance to gain this experience. I'm sure that it will help me to grow in so many ways, mainly in my relationships in teaching but with the difficulty of living in a different country, with a new culture and language!

I'm sure I will also learn a lot from everybody and I will try to share all my knowledge and hope that it will be beneficial for everybody.

I have travelled a lot (Europe, America, north Africa, Japan) and I always try to meet people and live as residents do as I am very curious and love to know how people live in different places. I really wanted to go to Sri Lanka/India as these are countries that are really rich spiritually and lots of my friends came back changed from their vision of life. It seems that people are really hospitable and smile and I can't wait to start the experience.



Hello! My name is Andreas (or "Andy" if you prefer). I just turned 30, I have three sisters and a twin brother and the home of my parents is surrounded by mountains :-). So I like mountains, but I don't have to climb up to all of them – it is also wonderful just to look at them. I am from Austria, but I live and work in Germany (Munich) for about 7 years now.

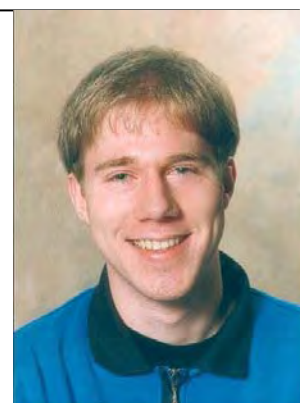
I quit my job at the end of November 2011 because I was unhappy with it. Before I start a new one I want to use this "break" to ascertain if I still want to work as a Software Engineer, to broaden my horizon by opening my heart and my mind to a new culture and tradition (as well as a different everyday-life, I guess), and – last but not least – to do something useful in that time which also helps people.

Since I worked as a Software Engineer (think of it as a Software Developer if you want) I have chosen to volunteer on the Computer Project in Sri Lanka. Therefore I'll work at the Mawala IT Centre near Wadduwa. I will arrive in Sri Lanka on February 1st and my return flight is scheduled on March 30th.

I'm very excited to meet new people, especially if they are also open for others. So I'm looking forward to getting to know my new upcoming friends :-)

I hope that I will find some volunteers as well as local people for an open talk about their culture, their life and how they think about things (which I'm sure will differ from my way to see or think about it). And I hope that it doesn't take me too long to acclimate to Sri Lanka's environment conditions (high humidity, spicy food, etc).

Best wishes,
Andreas



Hi Folks!

I'm Peter and I will be volunteering for a couple of months' English teaching support in Feb/March 2012. I'll probably be the oldest vullie in town, as I was in a hugely enjoyable and instructive and sociable Projects Abroad visit to Senegal this time last year. I'm retired now, from a working life of marketing and research, and am now living in France for half a year. My 3 kids and 5 grandkids are all very self-sufficient, so I want to go to parts of the world I'd not previously visited, savour meeting new people, contrasting cultures and tactile experiences and, I hope, contribute something worthwhile to the team and the local community in the process. Make my 60's a decade of adventure!

Teaching big classes of teenagers (and little 'uns for a week or two) and some wonderfully good-natured and fun-filled evening classes in Senegal was a real baptism; I'd never taught before, so learning the ropes, preparing and delivering lessons were all adventures in themselves. I'd like to keep that ball rolling in Sri Lanka ... with several other places around the globe to follow. I had a 1-week beach-based holiday in Sri Lanka many years back and remember just how friendly, welcoming and lovely this country was. I am MAD about cricket too – I might even get to a day of the 1st Test vs England in late March! And if I can find the music and laughter on offer too, so much the better. I'd always hoped to come back here for more, so here's my chance. Roll on February!



Ich heie Mischa, bin 19 Jahre alt und wohne in Deutschland. Ich habe im letzten Sommer mein Abitur absolviert und berlege mir nun, in welche Richtung ich in Zukunft gehen will.

Bevor ich allerdings in Deutschland anfangen, mich zu orientieren, hatte ich das Bedrfnis etwas mehr von der Welt zu sehen. Da ich jedoch nicht einfach verreisen wollte, um nur als Tourist andere Lnder kennen zu lernen, entschloss ich mich ein soziales Praktikum zu machen. Mit diesen Wnschen stie ich dann nach einiger Zeit auf die Organisation Projects Abroad, welche mir eine Vielzahl an Praktika in den verschiedensten Lndern anbot. Letztendlich interessierte mich Sri Lanka am meisten, da man zur Zeit des Tsunami sehr viel ber dieses Land erfuhrt, das mediale Interesse aber schnell abrisst und man so nicht mehr wei, wie die aktuelle Situation in Sri Lanka ist. Mit Hilfe eines Praktikums, bei dem ich in einem Kindergarten arbeite, bekomme ich jedoch die Mglichkeit zu sehen wie es einem Land ein paar Jahre nach einer solchen Katastrophe geht.

Ich denke nach der Schule ist der ideale Zeitpunkt, solchen Wnschen und Fragen nachzugehen, und bin sehr froh diese Mglichkeit fr mich gefunden zu haben.

Ich hoffe, dass ich viele wertvolle Erfahrungen in dieser ganz anderen Kultur machen kann, und bin berzeugt, dass mir die Zeit in Sri Lanka helfen wird, mich danach in meiner eigenen zu orientieren. Ich freue mich auf die kommende Zeit und bin gespannt, was mich in Sri Lanka erwartet.

Mischa Putzke



Ich heie Rahel und bin neunzehn Jahre alt. Ich wohne in Deutschland in der Stadt Marburg. Ich habe letzten Sommer mein Abitur an der Waldorfschule Marburg gemacht und arbeite nun in unserem Stadtkrankenhaus. Dort begleite ich Patienten zu ihren Untersuchungen und bringe sie danach wieder auf ihr Zimmer.

Jedoch habe ich das Bedrfnis, zu verreisen und eine andere Kultur kennen zu lernen. So kam ich auf Projects Abroad, welche mir einerseits viele tolle Reiselnder anbieten und dazu noch die Mglichkeit geben, mich mit dem Fach Medizin auseinander zu setzen.

Letztendlich entschloss ich mich, mit meinen Freunden nach Sri Lanka zu gehen, um dort in der kleinen Stadt Panadura ein dreimonatiges Praktikum in einem Krankenhaus zu absolvieren. Ich freue mich sehr auf diese drei Monate in Sri Lanka und hoffe, dass ich viel vom Land und seiner Kultur erfahren werde. Auerdem denke ich, dass mir die Arbeit in einem Krankenhaus einer gnzlich anderen Kultur bei meiner Entscheidungsfindung bezglich meiner Zukunft hilft.

So gehe ich mit viel Vorfreude auf diese drei Monate zu und bin glcklich, dass ich diese schne Gelegenheit fr mich gefunden habe!

Liebe Gre

Rahel



Hallo,

Mein Name ist Sophie Behrendt. Ich bin 21 Jahre alt und wohne in Dieen am Ammersee, das liegt in der Nhe von Mnchen.

Letztes Jahr im Frhling habe ich mein Abitur gemacht, und warte zurzeit auf einen Medizin-Studienplatz.

Ich werde vom 10. Januar bis 12. April 2012 in Sri Lanka sein und dort ein Praktikum im Krankenhaus machen. Dadurch erhoffe ich mir einen Einblick in die verschiedenen Arbeitsfelder der Medizin zu bekommen, um besser abwgen zu knnen, ob der Beruf der rztin etwas fr mich ist.

Da mein Vater HNO-Arzt ist, begleitet mich die Medizin schon mein Leben lang und fasziniert mich sehr, besonders da es ja auch darum geht Menschen zu helfen. Meine Mutter ist Knstlerin und arbeitet bei meinem Vater in der Praxis. Meine Schwester studiert Psychologie.

Ich werde versuchen soviel wie mglich aus diesem Praktikum mitzunehmen, und vor allem die Menschen, Kultur und Religion in Sri Lanka kennen zu lernen. Dafr werde ich mein Bestmglichstes leisten, und hoffe so auch im Austausch etwas zurckgeben zu knnen.

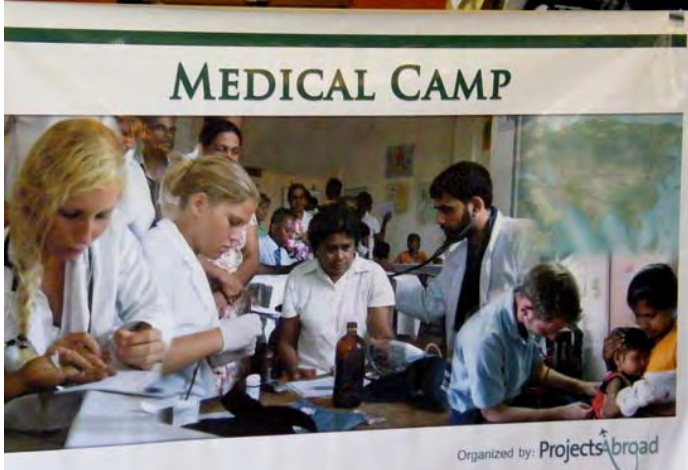
Ich freue mich schon sehr und kann es kaum erwarten, endlich in dieses schne Land zu fahren!

Ganz liebe Gre, Sophie.

Medical Camp Photos

Date : 15 January 2012

Location : Sri Ramaneyaramaya,
Beruwala



MEDICAL CAMP

This time the medical camp was held at Beruwala on Sunday 15th January 2012. The camp was organized by the Chief Buddhist monk of the temple. It was situated far away from Beruwala town. Before the camp we had informed the villagers by using posters, banners, leaflets etc so there were huge crowds ready to attend to the medical camp.



The camp started at 9 in the morning. Three doctors, fifteen medical volunteers and staff members of Projects Abroad participated. Our volunteers were astonished to see such a huge crowd. One of the doctors instructed the volunteers in how to measure blood pressure levels and check blood glucose levels of patients. There after the patients, who were in fasting, were served with breakfast. Others referred to the doctors for medical advice and then prescribed medicines according to their health condition. As a Pharmacist, I had to dispense medicines for nearly 400 patients. Hannah and some volunteers helped to clear the crowd.

During the camp we found one patient who had high blood glucose level. It was 299mg/dl. She was not aware about the hyperglycemic condition. The Doctor and I advised her how to control blood sugar level properly and gave some medicines too. She was then referred her to the Nagoda hospital, Kalutara for further treatment.

At about 3'Oclock we managed to clear the crowd. We had our lunch at 3.30 and were all very tired after the long day. All volunteers were very happy about the camp and they told me that they got great hands on experience and really enjoyed it.

Roshini Rathnatilake.

Medical Supervisor



Social Out-Reach Day

Date : 27th January
Location : Anula Wijerama Girl's Home,
Beruwala
Tasks : Painting 3 buildings



Lunch at Bentota Beach Hotel



Donations

Projects Abroad donated

Rs 20,000/= to purchase 125 towels to the Kalutara GA office for the World Disable day

Rs 10,000 to purchase 2 steel hooks for the operating theater at the Kethumathi Hospital

Anne Gleason

Monthly sponsorship for the Curry Kitchen program in Niggaha.

Janet Tate

Monthly sponsorship for the tsunami children in Kalutara.



Daya Nivasa - Kandy

From October to December, I had the opportunity to work at Daya Nivasa orphanage in Kandy. As an Occupational Therapy student, I was able to utilize my time with Projects Abroad as my final doctorate level rotation. Daya Nivasa, a home for children and adults with physical and cognitive impairments, is run by the Missionaries of Charity, Mother Teresa's sisters. In addition to developing my therapy skills, working with the Missionaries of Charity and Projects Abroad provided an incredible opportunity for personal growth and self-reflection.

Although working with so many people with physical and cognitive challenges can be taxing, there is so much that volunteers can do. While I was there, I focused on providing therapy to the children and education/training for the sisters and caregivers. The sisters and caregivers told me what health information they would like to learn, and I was able to hold two training sessions and develop two training manuals to discuss this information. The first manual contained information on conditions typically seen at the orphanage. The second manual included an evaluation, a checklist of activities that would be helpful for each child's health and development, and an in-depth description of every individual child's functioning coupled with recommendations to advance their health.

Another thing that seemed helpful was to connect sisters and caregivers with local healthcare providers. When healthcare providers learned about the children, they were able to help. Sometimes, it just takes a person to facilitate their meeting. While I was there, I was able to set up some appointments for a little boy who had experienced a medical condition all his life. When we took him to the hospital, the doctors discussed providing a free surgery that could correct his impairment. This may enable him to be adopted. I also was able to speak with local doctors and therapists about setting up therapy for a little girl that required long term intervention. Additionally, I was able to connect with local Occupational Therapists. One of the therapists organized a training conference where I provided treatment information for therapists and parents of children with impairments. Upon my departure, I was able to donate the American therapy equipment that I had brought to the local therapists.

Working at Daya Nivasa was an incredible spiritual experience. I had the chance to learn from the sisters who sacrificed their entire lives to serve God by caring for the residents of Daya Nivasa with patience, gentleness, dignity. They dignified and accepted everyone to the home no matter their condition, their level of functioning, or the amount of assistance they needed. Working at the orphanage developed my flexibility and my creative problem-solving skills. My experience taught me to appreciate each person's progress no matter how large or small, and even more importantly, showed me that even people with extreme challenges can love to be alive.

The Projects Abroad Staff were tremendous. They helped me research medical conditions, important cultural

nuances and community resources. They frequently contacted me to see if I needed assistance, provided social opportunities throughout the country and acted as emotional support as I worked with many sick and impaired persons.

I hope that my experience can provide insight to future Daya Nivasa volunteers. If volunteers take initiative, they can make a tremendous difference. Utilize resources such as local medical professionals, Projects Abroad staff and community organizations, just make sure you receive the sisters' permission first. The sisters honor the privacy of the residents and it would be considered inappropriate to share any information about them without permission. If you are respectful and humble, the sisters will be quite open to suggestions.

Any volunteer that goes to Daya Nivasa will have unique contributions to offer, but ask the sisters to see the training manuals that I developed. They may provide helpful background on the children and give you some ideas of things to do with them. Be patient with the circumstances at the orphanage. Many of the residents have challenging conditions and the sisters and caregivers have not received special training to work with these conditions. They work very hard, but things will not be perfect. The more prepared you are to work with imperfection, the more you will accomplish.

Give the children the toys and materials at the facility. The children need lots of stimulation and giving them toys is a great opportunity for it. Since many of the children have physical impairments, they have a limited ability to move on their own. They absolutely love when people pick them up, help them walk, bounce, or rock them. Helping the children move provides stimulation, helps their vestibular system (inner ear) learn how to balance and orient them, assists muscles all over their bodies get stronger, and makes them feel special just to have your attention; the more personal interaction (eye contact, appropriate physical touch, smiling, and laughing) the better. Personal interaction helps with their brain development and reminds them that they are loved! No matter what you do, you will learn a great deal, and the children will be overjoyed you are there.

Maura McGlynn