



Lights for Learning 2004

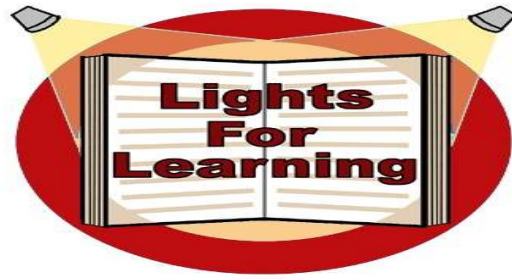
In Conjunction with

Couples for Christ

PHILIPPINES TRIP

Post Trip Report

By
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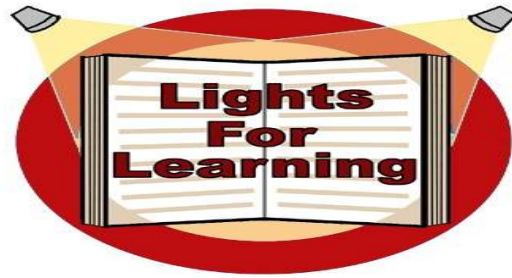


Lights for Learning 2004

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Forward



Lights for Learning 2004

Back in 2002 I suddenly found myself in the totally unexpected situation of being disabled and being told that I would never be able to hold down full time employment again, not very good for a 'young man' of fifty three. We had previously taken a couple of holidays in Kenya and had befriended a young man named Chirea, We had started to help him with the cost of educating his family, and on the last occasion that we had visited the family one of the little ones had been badly burned. This in effect brought about the birth of Lights for Learning.

Not being in my nature to sit back and feel sorry for myself; after the initial shock and 'depression' of my illness I decided that I would try to make up some kind of lighting system to help 'our Kenyan Family' and started looking on the internet for something that would be suitable for the building that he lived in, but would also be cheap to use.

After having installed the lights and having them running for a while we realised that we were hitting problems with things like humidity, them moving their cooking area underneath the light and creating a thick coat of soot on the cover! Etc.

The lights were developing every time that we hit a problem, and we suddenly realised that the system that we had could be so advantageous to so many youngsters that were trying to carry out their studies by the light from the fire or kerosene lamps, both not very good lighting and extremely hazardous to health. A friend of ours was following the development of the lighting system and agreed to help us get the project registered as a charity. We had looked at this previously but gave up when we became engulfed in bureaucracy and numerous forms.

Lights for Learning eventually became registered in 2004 and since then we have made great friends with so many people that we had never heard of before, and without whom we would never be where we are today in our achievements with the charity.

Overview

Lights for Learning is a registered charity based in Cricklade Wiltshire, working in the developing countries of the world wherever we are given the opportunity to go.

Since becoming registered in 2004 we have worked very closely with Project Albert, a charity based at RAF Lyne ham in Wiltshire, who work in Kenya with an organisation called Africa Exchange and a charity based in that country called Bridging the Gap. Alongside these charities we have provided lights for a school in Kibera, one of the slums of Nairobi, and two schools on the Massai Mara.

We have also given a set of twenty lights to the Lions Club of Mombasa and they have had them fitted into an educational centre where young people are being taught trades.

In March we took lights over to Kenya to fit into a clinic and two schools. This was arranged through the Rotary Club of Mombasa.

In November we took a team of seven to a village named Twingi in the north of Zambia. This was an awesome trip and will be unforgettable for everyone that was there. We flew into Lusaka and then had a thirteen hour bus trip to Twingi high School which was situated on a peninsula of a lake. All that was there was the school and a village (which we never got to see!) The nearest town was 100k away from the school. We stayed there for ten days and fitted lights into the majority of the school, and to see the end effect of the lights being on at night, and to feel the excitement of the students was something that we will never forget or see again. At the end of the project we were invited to a meeting with the Permanent Secretary and several other ministers of the Government and they have been very co-operative over making Twingi secure as promised, and they have agreed to help us with any other projects that we may carry out in their country.

We started to work on the Welcome Home Project in the Philippines in 2006 when we were contacted by a lady named Ditas who lives in the USA. She had visited our web site and enquired about the possibility of buying a solar panel every now and then to eventually install some low voltage lighting into a village in the Philippines. Her parents, who were very involved in the village, were to celebrate their Golden wedding anniversary in 2009, and she thought that they would be really pleased if she could supply a system to give the residents light. She told us of her parents work, and the group that they belonged to and explained how they had built a village for deaf mutes on the outskirts of the city of Bacolod. We were told that there were 25 houses where the children have their lessons every other day, and one classroom. The children were all able bodied and all could hear and speak. We had a trustees meeting and decided it

would be a good project for the charity to adopt. We contacted Ditas' parents and asked if they would like us to come over to the Philippines to fit solar lighting into their village; the response was amazing, they were over the moon to think that we would go over and carry out the work for them. The group belong to an association named Couples for Christ which is linked to the Catholic faith.

The first challenge was to raise the money, the estimated cost of the project being approximately £8,500, plus flights and shipping. The first donation came from International Power, who donated £2,500. Nick Dye who competed in the Iron Man Contest raised £1200, Mac Tilling did the London to Brighton cycle race and also the Salisbury 100 event raising approx £500 in total, and Stewart Hilliard raised £256 completing the three peaks challenge. Along with this we were still receiving the regular donations and carrying out our normal fundraising events. It was decided to take a seven man team with two extra new Members to assist with the fitting in future.

The Team



Jean Mugridge



Roger Mugridge



Mike Noble



Peter Genet



Adam Larking



Sue Larking



Chris Larking



Michelle Stewart new member



Andrew Noble, second new member.

When the day arrived to leave for the Philippines it was 5am, and we had 18 hours of flying ahead of us. We arrived at Bacolod airport at 4.30pm the next day, and this was our greeting!



There were 5 families there to meet us, and these were to be our hosts for the ten days that we were there. We were taken to their homes and welcomed as one of the family. On the first evening we all met up at the home of Ditas' parents for a welcome reception; the food was lovely and the people were great!

On the Sunday morning we started work at 9.00am. We went into 2 teams and Michelle and Andrew went to the classroom to be trained by Roger on the fitting procedure. Whilst they started to fit the lights the other 2 teams started work on the houses. Unfortunately somewhere between the communications prior to the trip, an error was made and there were only 10 houses and not 25 as we were led to believe. There was nothing to be done other than to set to work on what there was. At lunch time more of the hosts turned up with a cooked lunch. By the end of the day we had finished only two of the houses because a lot of the wood was rotten and eaten by termites, and we had also completed three quarters of the classroom.

On day two we started at 6.00am and waited for a film crew that were coming at 7.45am to film us fitting the lights, and to do an interview with us. After that we had to go and meet the mayor of Talisay, that meeting lasted for an hour.



From here we went straight to a meeting with the Governor of Bacalod, which was very interesting. After all of this excitement we returned to carry on working at the village. When we arrived we were met by a lady named Emma. She was working in another village in Sagay called Peace village where the inhabitants were rebels who had lived in the mountains and had been given amnesty. She was interested in the lights because their school classroom and their youth centre had no lighting. She was wondering how much it would cost to put light into these buildings. A quick 'meeting' and the trustees told Emma that we had some kit left over, and that we could carry out the work when we had finished at Welcome Home, probably Thursday and Friday, to say that she was over the moon was an understatement! We found out that Ricky, another of the group was travelling to Peace Village the next day, so we asked if someone could travel with him to look at the work, and to see what was needed. At Welcome Home the classroom was finished and worked well, (why wouldn't it!) Michelle and Andrew were really happy. We finished work at 6.30pm, and went to get ready for the evening meal at our hosts home, Teody and Cynthia Lopingco's as it was their 35th wedding anniversary.

Next day it was a 6.00am start; Roger and Andrew met Ricky at McDonalds. It was a 2 1/2 hour drive up to Sagay although it was only 110k. The roads were not very good, and on route they visited 3 other villages. They were all brightly coloured. Some of the residents were not in good health. One lady had a very large growth over her left eye which carried down to the lower part of her cheek.

The peace village looked as if it was a new village. The youth centre was by the road and being worked on, and the classroom was at the other end of the village. It was calculated that there was enough kit to do all of the work requested for the village; they arrived back at Bacolod at around 5.30pm.

That evening we had a dinner hosted by the Mayor of Bacolod Mr Bing Leonardia. There were speeches given by the Mayor, Lights for Learning and Couples for Christ. The Mayor invited us to a Festival that was to be held on the Friday afternoon where there was to be dancing presentations from many groups from around the area.



The next day was a (rest day!) We did not meet until 9.00am the first stop was a Gawad Kalinga fishing village called Dakutan Diutay the houses were built on stilts because when there was a very high tide the area flooded. They also had a classroom which had electricity. The village was mainly occupied by fishermen though a bakery had also been set up in the village.



We also visited a farmers' sugar cane plant, one of the biggest industries in the Bacolod region. One of our hosts, Ginah, worked here and she had taken great pride in having set out our itinerary for the trip. She was determined that we would have as much of the Philippine culture as possible and set out as many trips as she could in between our work schedule. We had a great time with her,

especially when something happened to ‘upset her schedule’, we will never forget her, or come to that, any of our hosts, they were all great people. Ginah had scheduled us to visit a chapel and a museum at this time; unfortunately we had to forego the chapel as we ran out of time. At lunch time we all went to a Rotary club meeting because 3 members of the team from UK are Rotary members, one being the president, and one the vice president of Cricklade Rotary club. After this most of the team went shopping, but Peter, Mike and Roger went off to a TV studio where they had been invited to do an interview. We thought that the interview would only last for about 5 minutes, but when they arrived they were told that the whole show was dedicated to our trip and the work of LFL and Couples for Christ.

The next day we all set off for the Peace Village at 6.00am. We arrived there at 9.00am. The same teams worked together; Peter and Mike organised the Youth Centre team, and Roger went with the team, being Chris, Sue, Andrew and Michelle to complete the classrooms. We also had 4 electricians to help us



These are the youth centre and training rooms still to be finished



These are the classrooms at the village they were sponsored by 6 companies who raised the money to have them built. The people in Peace Village were mountain rebels who were given amnesty. All of the people in the village were very nice, and extremely grateful for what we were doing for them. Here are some of the houses and people.



The young

and the old

We managed to finish all of the work in one day. We were there until 6.30pm and it was good to see the lights working. We had a hotel to stay in overnight \$35 for 10 of us! Not bad hey?

The next day we visited the vanishing inland, a small reef, and the local market. When we arrived back at the City we went straight to the Festival that the Mayor had invited us to. We had front row seats, and again, we were very high profile with the TV and photographers all around us.

That evening we had another Dinner, this time laid on by the Mayor of Talisay; again there were speeches from all representatives of the trip. This time Peter spoke on behalf of Lights for Learning.

After the meal Peter did another interview for another TV crew; this time it was with a lady who is the equivalent of Oprah Winfrey in the Philippines!



Quite an eventful day again, and all of the Government officials that we met all sad that the next time we go the Philippines to work they will give us all the help that we need. The next two day we spent talking about more school projects at needed completing in the country and we also felt that there was a good possibility that we could set up workshops in the Philippines. We could call on the Couples for Christ group to oversee the manufacture, and the monitor the schools where the lights would be most beneficial.

Our last evening was spent at Ginah's home. A wonderful spread was laid on with a roasted pig stuffed with lemon grass and something else that I can't recall. Apparently Philippines have this succulent plate at all festivals and celebrations – it was delicious! We spent a wonderful evening with our hosts who presented us all with gifts to remind us of our trip – as if we would need reminding! We took many photographs for our albums and thoroughly enjoyed the company! Unfortunately the evening didn't last for as long as we would have liked as we all had an early start the following morning to get our flight home.

We left the Philippines 6.20am on the Monday with the thought of another long flight ahead of us. All of our hosts were there to see us off, what a pleasure the trip had been, and I believe that we all felt that we were leaving good friends behind us. We arrived back in Cricklade at 11.30pm that night. Back home until the next time!

Here are some photographs of the trip.





ONCE AGAIN, THANK YOU FOR ALL OF YOUR HELP.

