

## 2013 Humanitarian Mission Scholarship to Bacolod, Philippines

by Linda Beagley BSN MS RN CPAN

On January 1, 2013 a team of 25 humanitarians left Chicago traveling to Bacolod, Philippines. Our mission was to help build housing for families in the village. University students attending school in the Joliet Diocese apply to participate on this yearly trip. The team consists of students, chaperones from the schools, a priest, and a nurse along with the leader of the mission trip. The 2013 trip was the largest out of the six years of travelling to the same area.

The main objective is to work on housing for a village that originally started as a group of squatters. Their homes are built of a variety of materials scavenged from the area that does little to protect the inhabitants from wet or windy weather. Similar to the story of the *Three Little Pigs* it would not take much wind to blow the house down. Funded by Gawad Kalinga a Filipino non-profit, provides the supplies of cinder blocks, gravel and mortar to construct a solid structure protecting from the rain and high winds. These supplies are dropped off at the side of the road and then carried brick by brick to the construction site approximately 2 blocks away.

Many helping hands from the very old to the young helped construct the duplex house. The university students worked alongside the residents by carrying the supplies, mixing the sand and gravel into mortar and quickly the sides of the house went up. Preliminary work had been done prior to our group



arriving. The area had been stripped of a smaller shack and the outline of the house dug out to lay the fittings of the structure. After the walls were finished the outside had two layers of mortar applied and smoothed out so that paint could be applied to give the house a festive look. Rocks were added to the floor of the structure, patted down and concrete was mixed to apply on top. Buckets of concrete were carried to make up the floor. Finishing touches of a roof would be outsourced for professionals to complete using iron beams and corrugated tin.

My role in the trip was to provide first aid and keep everyone healthy while on the trip. During the formation meeting I spoke on tips of safe travel, hydration and staying healthy. Just a few hours out of Ohare, one of the student's was not feeling well. After ruling out other possibilities I decided she had the stomach flu. Counseling and giving some motherly support was all I could do. Mid way through the trip we had a mini outbreak of stomach flu. Students were quarantined and put on the BRAT diet when they began to feel better. During construction we had some minor scrapes that needed attention and bug bites that required cortisone cream.

A highlight for me on the trip was the opportunity to teach the young children of the village how to brush their teeth. I recruited three university students who have healthcare majors to help with the teaching. Prior to starting I discussed with my recruits the steps of brushing teeth. We demonstrated on how to use the tooth brush, how much paste to apply and where to store the toothbrush when not in use. Using the new brush we demonstrated on each child how to use it with a return demonstration. A few days later I came across a young boy of 5 or 6 who was brushing his teeth and spitting into the walk way that I was using. I guess he wanted to show me that he understood what was taught.

I really enjoyed working with the university students. It was very refreshing to work with, to talk with and pray with young people who truly cared about others. The villagers were very appreciative of our efforts. On closing I would like to thank ASPAN for providing the Humanitarian Scholarship that assisted me to fund part of my trip.

