

Global Village Youth Program

Envisioning a larger world

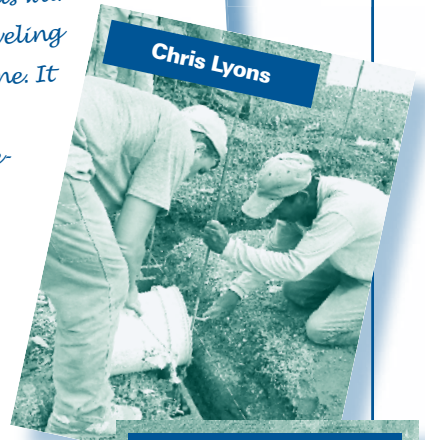
By Sumner McCallie

Sumner McCallie is the dean of residential life and teacher at The McCallie School in Chattanooga, Tenn. Sumner ventured to Guatemala in June 2007 on a Global Village Youth Program (GVYP) trip, serving alongside his students as they learned lessons they never could have in the classroom.

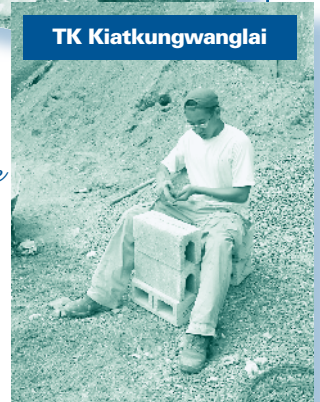
As a teacher, there are few things better than watching students realize that their world is significantly larger than they might have initially considered. I had the chance to do just this with a fellow faculty member and seven of my students. Together, we had the privilege of traveling to Huehuetenango, Guatemala, to work with Habitat for Humanity for two weeks in June. It was a tremendous experience.

My memory of one student, Chris, will forever be his mixing mortar to add to the cement blocks to stabilize the vertical rebar. Though this wrestler's and lacrosse player's coaches might have been concerned about time away from the weight room, they needn't have been, given the back-challenging loads of gravel, sand, and cement which Chris shoveled into a heavy slurry and then carried to fellow students laying block. For another student, TK, it will be his absolute love of finding smooth volcanic rock to use as a pestle for cutting wire with a chisel, and his then bending steel bands with an improvised wooden tool to use for making rebar frames — structures that reinforce the homes in the earthquake-prone country. His smile could not have been larger as he finished the 12th of 12 18-foot frames, the result of three days of hard work. A third student, Sam, will stay etched in my mind playing with a joyous 5-year-old son of the homeowner on his knee, enthralled with the creation of a makeshift "Barrel of Monkeys" game using a set of TK's C clamps. The several hours on a rainy afternoon could not have passed more quickly listening to shrieks of delight as the next C clamp was hooked and lifted up.

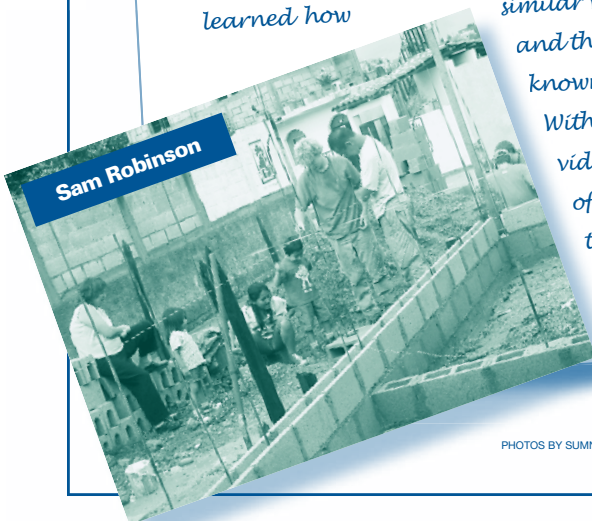
What GVYP gave to my students was a chance to see the real Guatemala. They had the opportunity to work side by side with two Guatemalan families who are trying to improve their lives. My guys felt connected and valuable. They gained insight into the life experience of a vast majority of the world. As we noted at the end of the build ceremony, they also learned how similar we all are — the same needs for shelter, the same care for family, and the same potential for a warmth of spirit between strangers who had known each other only for a few days. Such experience is life-changing. With the support of foundations like the Palmer Foundation, who provided grants to several of my students, and with the logistical expertise of Habitat, the chance to travel overseas and broaden life's perspectives simply required a person to step forward and say, "Let's try this." I'm glad we did.



Chris Lyons



TK Kiatkungwanglai



Sam Robinson

PHOTOS BY SUMNER McCALLIE

Global Village Youth Program offers customized international service trips for groups of youth ages 14 to 25. For more information, visit www.habitat-youthprograms.org/gvyp.