

Team Building of Project Pearls After School Program Volunteers

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April 9 is The Day of Valor celebrated all throughout the country. But for us volunteers of Project Pearls After School Program, this was the day of building a stronger bond amongst us and reestablishing our goal.

Below is the list of activities and sessions executed during our team building and how does it affect us either individually or as a whole team based on my perception.

The Introduction. Each one of us had the opportunity to introduce our self, how did we find Project Pearls, when did we started volunteering and if we were going to compare ourselves to a thing or animal, what would it be and why.

Through this first activity of the day, we had the chance to get to know more each other, laughed at ourselves, and admire each one because of everybody's uniqueness. One thing in common that we all have is the heart, that kind of heart for the less fortunate little ones.

“I can compare myself to a sun. Lulubog, lilitaw pero siguradong hindi mawawala.” – Ron Jason Pascual



Session 1: Who is Project PEARLS? Volunteers were divided into two groups. Team Diwata and Team Diyosa.

For the first team game was a memory game. Each team was given a short period of time to memorize the mission and vision of Project Pearls. The first team who would say it aloud without reading the *kodigo* would be the declared winner. Team Diwata made it!

Vision: To end child poverty as poverty denies children their rights to health, nutrition and a basic education.

Mission: To help the poorest of the children in the Philippines have a better life through our various outreach programs. We are hoping we can give them P.E.A.R.L.S. (Peace, Education, Aspiration, Respect, Love and Smiles).



The next game was the re-arrangement of Project Pearls' timeline or history. Again, Team Diwata made it! They have matched the date and the events accurately.



Through this activity, we - volunteers were enlightened and became knowledgeable of what Project Pearls is all about. Its goal was then became our goal. We were now cleared of what we are really doing and what we are envisioning inside this organization aside from feeding the kids and teaching them every Sunday morning.

Session 2. Project “Education” : The Storytelling Workshop and Puppet Show.

This session was facilitated by one of the volunteers Arman Macha. He thought us some basic information about Storytelling and Puppet Show. After giving some lessons was the “Practicum”. Still it was Team Diwata versus Team Diyosa. We have to conduct a storytelling and puppet show for some of the kids who were near us. We gather some kids to be our audience and judges as well.

Needless to say, Team Diwata won again the two challenges through the unanimous decision of the kids.

Above all, we really enjoyed this activity and we had so much fun while striving!





Session 3. Project “Love” : The Needle Game. The challenge was to put a total of 20 needles on a single thread. Each team was given a roll of thread and a bundle of needles. While doing this, two of the team members would be human-timers. They must carry a five-gallon container with water on it while arms being raised upward and shouldn't be down until the challenge was done.

Again, Team Diwata won. A team work was really felt on this game. Each team did their best to finish the task the soonest because they were thinking about the sacrifice and hardship of the members who were carrying the gallons of water.

Being a volunteer is just like that. You don't do it just because of convenience or because out of boredom. It is a commitment more than an advocacy. Just like love, being a volunteer is a sacrifice. You are exerting effort, time, money and most of all, the love itself.

Team scores recall: 5-0 / Team Diwata – Team Diyosa.

Oh, well. 😊



Session 4. Project “Respect” : How To Handle Kids. This session slash educational talk was facilitated by our resident Psychology Professor and Project Pearls After School Program Coordinator, Jemma Punzalan. She taught us some tips and approaches that we can apply or use while handling kids at different situations. And how we can motivate the kids to study, identify and reached their life goals and realistic dreams.

We also got to know what we can do during hard times in dealing with kids especially those who are hard-headed and super naughty. One of the take-away lessons that I will always remember is that we must know first and consider our students’ background or *pinaghuhugutan* in order for us to understand why they behaved or act that way. Through this consideration, we will be able to acknowledge the approaches that we’re going to do or say to them.

Being a teacher would never be easy for it requires a pure and loving heart, a deep understanding, a very long thread of patience and a strong believe to his/her students that they can make it no matter how hard life brings.



Session 5. Project “Smiles”: Basic Photography Lesson. This was one of my most favorite sessions that we took during the team building. I love taking pictures and will always do. Weather candid shots, sceneries, interesting objects or anything would always be the subject of my lens.

The problem is that I don't follow nor believe any rules and guidelines for Photography. As long as it would give satisfaction to my eyes, so be it and click!

Thank you to our resident Photographer, Kat Bayaban for this opportunity. She got to share to us some of the principles she considers in capturing the best shots.

1. *Fill the frame with what you like.*
2. *Simplify and exaggerate.* Ironic it is but I got Kat's point on this. Every picture is an art and its outcome beauty will just depend on the photographer.
3. *Don't center the subject* because the captured images may look boring.
4. *Create depth.* I believe that in this principle, every image has a story to tell. That's why there's a saying that *a picture is worth a thousand words* and some its words may contain history, essence and message.
5. *Connect the dots/ leading lines.*
6. *The Perspective.* Again this will depend on the photographer on how he or she will show the world what he/she got. This may include top view, side view, etc. This is based on what I understand.
7. *Lighting is everything.*
8. *Break the rules* once in a while and have fun!

And now for the exercise or either application of what we have learned, Kat instructed us to take a picture using our own camera phones. We have to capture a smile or smiles of anyone around us. We have given only five minutes to do it. I prefer a candid shot so it took a lot of patience in finding that perfect shot. I was just so glad that I had it! Yey! Challenge accepted and done!



Session 6. Project “Aspiration”. Kat and Jedda also discussed the other programs of Project Pearls aside from the After School.

The Feeding Program or the Daily Soup Kitchen

The Lit Club

The Brain Booster – that happens every Saturday morning in Helping Land

The Scholarship Program

The Dental and Medical Mission

The Birthday Program

They also told us to help in promoting the organization through the social media simply by posting pictures and sharing posts about Project Pearls. We may use the hashtags Project Pearls and After School Program and indicate the official website so that more people will know and be aware about this organization.

Being a strong advocate has been part of my life since day one that I joined Project Pearls. So this request has always been a pleasure for me.

The Boodle Fight. And then it was lunch time. I may say that unity has been defined for this kind of meal. We didn't use individual plates nor any utensils but just our bare hands and ate on banana leaves as a team.



The Dare Game (7-up). After a hearty and full meal is supposed to be a siesta or nap time. That's a great life, isn't it? But not for us because we still have few activities to do. So in order to be still awake, we had a warm-up game and it's called 7-up. Whoever loses must do a consequence. The game has been smoothly played because all the volunteers who lost wholeheartedly accepted the dare given to them. Some danced, ramped as a model, talked to strangers, have joined the other groups who were playing jumping rope and many more.



(It was Melody and I who joined the other group of people to play the jumping rope.)

The Tug Tail Game. For our next game was this. Again, it was Team Diwata versus Team Diyosa. A handkerchief was put on the back of the last member and must not be caught by the other team. The one who is in front must get the other team's handkerchief.



This time it was Team Diyosa that won.

Session 7. Project “Peace”: The Longest Line Game with a twist. This was the last game. Each team must create a long line using all the things that they have within their body. The team that will create the longest line will be the winner. And here comes the twist. This must be done silently as in no any words must come out from each member’s mouth. So the most quiet and fastest team who will create the longest line will be the winner.

Again, Team Diyosa won. For the over-all team score, it was 5-2. Team Diwata - Team Diyosa.



So what is the essence of the last game?

Helping others must be done quietly. We don't have to shout to the whole world nor boast it like, "Hey everyone! Look at me! I'm good because I'm helping somebody."

As the saying goes, *Work hard in silence. Let success be the noise.*

So I therefore conclude that success can be felt through the silence of hard work. We are doing this not to have a show off but because we love doing this and we don't ask anything for return.

The Sharing. Why Do You Volunteer? After the last game, the whole team formed a circle and sat down for some self-reflections. Why do we volunteer? Each one has answers and I may say that as a whole, even though we all have different reasons, it would always fall back to a single thing. This is all because of LOVE. We all have that one love for those children who are deeply in need. I also believe that everyone is a lot luckier so why not help those people who are not so fortunate? Most of the time, happiness can be found on the gratefulness of the people that we touched and helped.

Volunteers are paid through smiles.



After the last session was swimming time! Some of the volunteers took the opportunity to ease the hot season through this wide swimming pool. While some chose to have a chilling time on a nearby halo-halo store.



After two hours we were completed again (on the halo-halo store) and we've got to know each other more through some talks. Some were about personal issues, impressions to each members, love life, etc.



We also had the chance to talk about our future plans for the After School Program and what we can contribute to it.

Through this team building, everyone felt that they are now much closer to each one of us and a united goal was envisioned.

For this one fine, sunny day, all of us gained new and closer friends, a lot of knowledge and realization that we play an important role to this organization. And this selfless organization is none other than The *Project Pearls*. We hope to give P.E.A.R.L.S. to everyone not just today nor every Sunday morning but everyday of our lives as well.





www.projectpearls.org