

# SUMMER OF SERVICE

Community service is not just a requirement of graduation at The Bishop's School. It is a core value embraced by its students and turned into a personal passion by some. During the past summer, a number of Bishop's students took on self-directed projects, volunteered countless hours to community organizations, and created unique service opportunities after their own hearts. In the following, we return to a South Korean orphanage with eight student volunteers (original story in Bishop's fall/winter 2005 issue) and share in the reflections of Bishop's volunteers whose projects were closer to home.

## RETURN TO "HOUSE OF ANGELS"

By Anita Palmer



Alex Na '10

This time juniors Julie Na and Delaney Mamer knew what they were getting into: a 14-hour plane trip, 12-hour work days, sore arms, strange food, and hard beds. The two Bishop's students had experienced it all as sophomores in the summer of 2005 during a two-week service project at an orphanage in South Korea. Even knowing how hard the trip would be, Julie and Delaney eagerly returned to the orphanage this summer, bringing along supplies purchased with the nearly \$1,600 they had raised during the year. But more importantly, they brought with them a cadre of fellow volunteers.

Six fellow Bishop's students—juniors Meaghan Barr, Katharine Collinson, Rebecca Farris, Julie Hooper, Mike LaCroix, and Julie's younger brother, freshman Alex Na—spent 10 days in early June caring for dozens of needy Korean infants and toddlers. Julie Hooper's mother, Virginia Gordon,

joined the volunteers at the orphanage. Julie Na's mother, Hyun, and Delaney's mother, Lindy, also made the trip but caught up with the group later in their stay.

"I was excited to go back and see the kids again. It was hard work but fun," said Julie Na, whose family helped arrange the trip.

The orphanage is known as *Chun Sa Eh Jip*, the House of Angels. It is situated two-and-a-half hours from Seoul in a rural mountain village called Khottdongnae. The

community was established by a Roman Catholic priest 30 years ago as a refuge for orphans and the disabled, mentally ill, and homeless.

Upon arrival the volunteers were divided into teams and immediately sent to work.

And work it was; this was no summer vacation. An entry posted by Meaghan in the group's weblog described their schedule: "We work in the mornings from 8 to 12, take a two-hour break until two, work with the kids for another three hours, and then return once more for a half-hour stint after dinner. By the time six o'clock rolls around, we're all fairly exhausted and spend the evening mostly lounging around in bed talking or reading."

Julie Hooper described the service project as a great learning experience even if it was "more work than I expected. I got very quick at changing diapers. Our arms were always sore."

The two young men in the group seemed to adjust to their childcare responsibilities just fine.

"We got attached to the kids," said Mike, who was assigned with Alex and Rebecca to a room of a dozen toddlers. "I still miss them."

Adjusting to Korean food was not as easy. Mike, who admits he is a picky eater, wrote in the weblog that "the highlight of this trip was when Julie Na's mother and aunt brought us the most [American] food I have seen since my last shift at Henry's [grocery store]."

The students also had to get used to wearing uniforms and following strict procedures. Sleeping crowded together on the floor on thin mats was not easy, and a respiratory virus hit the group midweek. The biggest obstacle may have been the lack of English among the staff, forcing Julie and Alex Na to often act as interpreters.

"To be honest, I was worried," said Hyun, referring to the hard work, culture shock, and close quarters she knew the volunteers faced. "But the group received and learned from the orphans just as much as they gave. I am very proud of the students, who handled the large amount of work with maturity and were cooperative and supportive of each other."

This may not be the last Bishop's trip to the House of Angels. Alex, whose family emigrated from South Korea seven years ago, said he learned a great deal about his Korean heritage this June. Now he is thinking about planning a service trip next summer with his own friends from Bishop's.



Wearing their pj's on their last night at the orphanage, the Bishop's group gathers around Sister Johannes.



Rebecca Farris '08

## REFLECTIONS

"The week I spent at [White Sands of La Jolla] was absolutely phenomenal. The residents staying in the 24/7 care wing, where I worked, were testaments to perseverance and joy. I took so much away from their daily examples and it was extremely fulfilling to see the difference I made in their daily lives..."

—Ryan Rubio '08, 30 hours of service

"I had been pushing for a Food Not Bombs [project] in San Diego for some time and, this August, it was underway. We go to farmers markets... bagel shops, our [kitchen] cabinets and collect food just past expiration, vegetables with blemishes, stuff farmers can't sell, and make a huge feast in the park in North Park every Sunday. The project is unique in that we spend no money collecting the food. We just provide free vegetarian food to anyone that is hungry. I learned how to cook. I met fantastic friends. I felt part of something that strengthened community in North Park."

—Stephen Raser '07, 25 hours of service

"The hardworking people at the Multiple Sclerosis [MS] Society always have something to be done—especially right before their big events... they really need volunteers. Although many of the tasks I did were not directly impacting those with MS, I really felt I was making a difference."

—Sarah Levin '09, 130 hours of service

"For my Eagle Scout project I refurbished old donated computers and then gave them to foster kids who were turning 18 and leaving the foster care program to live on their own. My project involved putting out posters asking for old computers, fundraising, organizing [others] to help me work on the computers, ordering parts and software, and distributing the finished computers. It was a very good learning experience and was fun to do."

—Russ Penniman '07, 212 hours of service

"I am part of a chamber music group that performs at many senior residences in La Jolla... My sister, Lily '06, and I organized this group last summer. I got to meet a lot of seniors and helped to brighten their day. Being elderly can be a very lonely experience, and it's nice to know that you have helped people get out and be more active and be a part of their community."

—Irys Kornbluth '07, 25 hours of service