

Regents Park Christian School (NSW)

Stories from the students

We went to Cherbourg to serve the Aboriginal community in both practical and spiritual ways. Practical ways involved visiting the nursing home, playing with kids on the oval, attending football games, and making crafts with the kids. We hosted religious education classes, held youth nights and dance outreaches, and contributed to church services and Sunday school. Personally, this trip impacted me tremendously. The experience opened my eyes to the needs and the strengths of certain communities. Likewise, it enabled me to catch a glimpse of what I aspire for my future career to embody. One day, a little girl sat beside me chattering excitedly about the fact they were going to have dinner – which we were providing. It came to my attention that she had no lunch and saw a thief at her house that day. Yet despite this, she was brave enough to pray to God for protection. With another child, I saw that she might have the talent to sing. Knowing she had seen the movie “Frozen” I sang the song in the hope that she would join along – and she did. She then thought of the idea to write a song but was uncertain of whether to do so. So I sat with her and gently prompted her on. A lot of the kids we met may have not received the love and affection that we perceive as “normal”. Nevertheless, no matter what harsh circumstances they may have faced, they have demonstrated a pure, strong faith-filled foundation on Jesus. And it is through these children that I, in turn, have strengthened my faith. My vision for the future unravelled as I saw the potential in a child before they have realised themselves. Therefore, I’d like to work with mentoring programs in the future. (Christine)

At first glance Cherbourg seemed very vague to me and I contemplated back and forth over the thought of going. Just the week before, I was placed in an incredibly difficult situation and was faced with the decision of maybe withdrawing from the team. However, there was a part of me that longed to reach out to this community. When the team and I arrived we commenced our organisational plans to prepare for the week ahead of us. But what we did not prepare for was the enormous impact the community, specifically the children, would have on our lives and Christian faith. For myself, I realised that the simplest of efforts can become a catalyst for greater good. While teaching religious education at the primary school I sat next to a little girl and said in a playful manner, “Did you know Jesus loves you no matter what?” Just by that, her eyes lit up with hope and she embraced me with a hug. It wasn’t until later that I realised the children strive for love and affection, which they might not receive at home. From this I was filled with desire and compassion to share the light and love of God in hopes that they too would find hope under whatever circumstance. Nevertheless, I feel more so as though they taught me valuable lessons. One that particularly stood out to me was when a girl walked towards me, placed a Bible in my hand and whispered, “Don’t stop reading. This is important.” The team and I reached out to the community through youth nights, Sunday schooling, church services, playing with the children and so much more. But we didn’t do it alone. Cherbourg has become an extension of our own family; we were welcomed into theirs. Going to Cherbourg blessed me with overwhelming amounts of joy, compassion, desire and love. I will treasure this experience forever. (Christine)