

Discovering Volunteering in Korea

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I have been in Korea for one year and three months. In that time I have seen large and small cities and the various problems facing them. The driving force that started my active volunteering was the sudden loss of my mother in February. I had found a volunteering group shortly before her death called PLUR (Peace, Love, Unity, Respect) and I started volunteering actively right before her death but was driven even more to help with their street homeless outreach around Seoul Station. While I lived in Seoul, I volunteered every week, and when I moved from Seoul to Anseong, I continually worked to find people to help feed the homeless on weeks I could not volunteer the 3-4 hours I volunteered regularly. Since I saw the magnitude of the homeless problem, I continually told my friends and former coworkers about the volunteering program to recruit other people to help feed the homeless. There were days when the group and I knew we did not have enough meals to give to every person on the street, so we adjusted our course to feed the people who were less likely to be able to access other resources. After I moved to Anseong, I was one and a half hours away from the volunteering site. I left the site around 10:30 pm after the finish, so I was exhausted when I arrived at work on Monday; however, my school was very supportive toward my volunteering.



While in Anseong, I shop at The Beautiful Store, which donates to many local charities, and Adam's coffee, a local coffee shop, who also donates to local charities. I am currently working with Adams coffee to extend my work in the other area I volunteer, orphanages. I worked yet again with PLUR to volunteer at Eumseong Orphanage and Angel House Orphanage while finding what different activities people do when helping at an orphanage in Korea. It seems to be dependent on the organizer and the orphanage's needs. I am currently spending about 2-5 hours a week trying to organize a new event in Anseong to have PLUR participants and community members participate. I have been discussing different activities at other orphanages and finding information about Anseong's orphanage. I have to overcome the language barrier by quickly trying to learn more Korean and enlisting friends to assist me in organizing the event. I know the US Air force base in Osan volunteers at the orphanage, so working with other people with limited Korean would still be beneficial. I also attend various special events such as fundraisers and one-time community events whenever possible, which happens about once every month to two months.

One of my friends connected me with Animal Rescue Korea, and though I was never a person that wanted to adopt a dog or cat, I found an adorable hedgehog I fostered for almost four months until a new native English teacher decided to adopt her permanently a month ago. However, I searched five different veterinarians in Anseong to find one who would see the hedgehog, when I was concerned with her health, and even found a veterinarian for her new parents when she was adopted. I still check with Animal Rescue Korea to see if I can be of any help, however no pets I was able to foster have become available recently.



The last area that I continually volunteer with is raising awareness about poverty in Korea and worldwide. I stay informed about worldwide injustices (like the fact that girls in Pakistan cannot attend school due to the Taliban's influence in certain areas). I make sure that my co-teachers and students know that bullying in Korea and worldwide is horrible, and to make sure that they know they are not alone when they are not alone when they are upset that other students make fun of them or hit them. Many students encounter bullying, however I make it clear to students they can talk to my co-teachers and I, and we create a comfortable environment for the students to learn.

As part of my ways of giving back to the community, I try to keep myself and others informed about useful information about the community and the world. If there is something we can do to help, then I will share and it is up to my students, friends, or co teachers to join. I support other friends volunteering organizations such as Mannam by courteously attending an activity when asked, and I attend community fundraiser to assist with funding various volunteer programs.

Overall, I am very happy I have found a way to volunteer in Korea. I have stayed true to my volunteering upbringing (volunteered at a hospital, worked for non-profits such as EMILY'S List and ONE). I have connected with many different people, and I have been known to find volunteer people anywhere I go. I am extremely thankful EPIK is promoting volunteering and hope that even more people volunteer in upcoming years.



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