

EAST TIMOR IMMERSION

Opening Our Eyes Hearts and Souls

By Hannah Grove and Gabrielle Pashley

For eight students and three teachers from Chanel College, Gladstone, life as we usually know it changed over the two weeks of the school holidays. We immersed ourselves in the East Timorese culture through community bonding and volunteering within the humble village of Baguia. Through connecting with numerous people in Baguia, we taught English and games, however they taught us the importance of community, family and the

realisation that materialistic things should not control our attitude towards life. We climbed mountains, played games in an orphanage, cooked dinner over an open fire; taught English in three different schools, sang songs and danced with passion, showered with only a litre of water every night and completely delved into every aspect of the lifestyle of Timor Leste. Life in a developing country contrasts greatly with the bustling chaos of the Western civilisation. We learnt to live simple lives so that others around us could simply live. Instead of allowing our belongings to matter more than belonging itself, we changed our teenage arrogances and found a common ground between ourselves and the East Timorese: life is short and must be fully lived.

We now have memories that can never be forgotten. This trip has opened our eyes, hearts and souls to the bigger problems within our world. As pieces in the puzzle of life, we as students of Chanel College feel it is vital to make small changes to what needs to be changed. However, before we can enhance the world, we need to enrich ourselves ... and Timor Leste helped us do this, influencing our values and our morals. It's important to grow from each life experience, and Timor Leste provided us with an abundance of life experiences and personal acceptance that did not exist previously.

Our group mutually agreed that working towards the greater things in life - family, humility and love - are the most rewarding gifts we could ever cherish. Our group strongly encourages future seniors to walk in our footsteps and engage in travels that make a difference in this world ... perhaps starting with Timor Leste.

Members of the East Timor Immersion:

Alex Botica, Courtney Doherty, Hannah Grove, Kiara Holzberger, Jaime Holzberger, Connor Kenny, Gabrielle Pashley, Patrick Sisley, Mrs Ann Mills, Mr Josh Carseldine and Mr Rod O'Mara.

