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ON THE EDGE ... where faith meets action

Youth Ministry in Lebanon

BY ASHLEIGH JARDINE

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. — Proverbs 22:6 ESV

Don Magbanua enjoys traveling and youth ministry. The theology student at Andrews University has been on two short-term mission trips where he helped construct churches in Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic. In 2012, Don went as a student missionary to Lebanon for the summer. It was there where he learned to “love people better” and “trust God without needing tangible evidence” that he is at work.



Don Magbanua and friends

That summer, Glenn Russell, assistant professor of religion at Andrews, was taking a class to the Middle East SDA University. Don saw the trip as a ministry opportunity, and signed up just one month before take-off.

When the group arrived in Lebanon, each took part in leading week of prayer meetings. Don also worked with a classmate to teach Bible classes at the local school. When classes ended for the summer, Don began a youth group with several local teenagers. Together, the group created and operated a summer camp for children of the church members and missionary families.

“We made it similar to FLAG (Fun Learning About God) Camp,” says Don. “We started every day with worship and spent the rest of the day playing games, making arts and crafts, and swimming with the kids.”

The camp ran for nearly six weeks that summer. During that time, Don noticed children outside the University gates “just playing in the streets.” He wanted to include them in the ministry, and shared his concerns with Glenn. With the help of the Niles Westside Church in Michigan, nearly \$2,000 were raised to sponsor 20 community children at camp for a week.

Don says he learned a lot from his experience in Lebanon. “Sometimes, I wondered if I was making a difference,” he remembers. “But the experience helped me realize that the way God works isn’t always explicit, ... it can be subtle. I can never disqualify what God is doing in those people’s lives now.”

Don hopes to work in youth ministries some day. He currently is involved in several clubs on campus, and serves as a youth pastor at a nearby church.

Ashleigh Jardine is a freelance writer from Berrien Springs, Michigan, where she is a physical therapy major at Andrews University.

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