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## Teaching and Learning in Palau

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# Teaching and Learning in Palau

BY ASHLEIGH JARDINE

“When I was a student missionary, God became someone who was not ‘far out there,’” says Ben Weakley, student at Andrews University. “He became a living, breathing part of my life.”



Ben Weakley

During the 2011–2012 school year, Ben served as a student missionary in the island country of Palau. He worked as a seventh-grade teacher for 15 students.

This wasn't the first time Ben had gone overseas. In high school, he and a group of classmates went to Chile to build a church. Spending two weeks in the country was an eye-opener for the students, but Ben's decision to be a long-term missionary came several years later. After hearing a friend's mission experience in Africa, he became seriously interested in going overseas for a year. His heart was set on Palau before his acceptance even came a few months later.

When Ben arrived in Palau, he quickly adjusted to life on the island. He bonded with the other missionaries and worked hard on lesson plans so he could hang out with students after school.

“The kids were very Americanized, but the community was much more close-knit,” Ben recalls. “I had a wonderful group of kids, the best kids I could ask for.”

Besides spending time with his students, Ben also became close with the church members. He claims the church was “all about Jesus” and was full of godly people who went out of their way to make him feel comfortable.

His experience in Palau was so powerful that Ben changed his major when he returned home. Someday he wants to work at an orphanage overseas and be involved with kids who come from rough backgrounds.

“I want to be a parent to kids who don't have any,” he says. “I want to be a support system for them.”

In the meantime, Ben spends his summers ministering to youth at Camp Au Sable. He has worked more than eight years at youth camps, and enjoys meeting new people there and talking about God.

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

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