

*"I can do all this through God who gives me strength."*

Philippians 4:13

## My Time in Dumaguete

I reside in Dumaguete City, Philippines, a small yet bustling city well known for world-renowned Silliman University. My time in Dumaguete has been filled with many highs and lows, adjustments and new comforts, challenges and triumphs. Yet, what has buoyed me is the warm and sincere hospitality shown by Filipino people, as well as moments to witness God's grace.

As a Long-Term Volunteer with Global Ministries, I have worked with GWAVE, Gender Watch Against Violence and Exploitation. GWAVE accompanies and advocates for women and children survivors of physical, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse and exploitation. I attend court hearings, various advocacy events, and home visits.

One event that helped fortify relationships was a Valentine's Day party. I hoped that the Valentine's Day party would be a time to be reminded that each person is cherished by God and their peers. In planning the party, some leaders from each organization believed that the teen abuse survivors of GWAVE were overwhelmed by their traumas and should work behind-the-scenes. However, I witnessed leadership abilities and saw that they were awaiting moments to share their gifts and passions with others.

I encouraged the good dancers among them to teach a dance lesson. I invited the artistically inclined survivors to lead an art project. The survivors were hesitant to lead activities for their peers but with time to prepare, they increased their confidence in their ability to facilitate activities.

When the day of the party arrived, I was anxious about all of the details coming together. Some things did go awry, including a power outage. Thankfully, though, none of the problems seem to deter the young women survivors of GWAVE. They confidently executed their activities and had fun doing it!

*Lauren Robinson serves with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. Her appointment is possible due to gifts to Disciples Mission Fund, Our Churches Wider Mission, and your special gifts.*



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