



## *Dear Friends,*

We've made it to summer! Thankfully, our summer heat didn't come as quickly this year, which made the school year feel a bit longer. Now we are sitting in the ever-present mugginess and getting used to being sweaty all the time. Other than the weather, summer brings a sense of freedom. Some of our programs go on break, and we have more free time on our hands. I love that part of summer! Families are more receptive to trips together, and deeper conversations come easier.

## SUMMER

We kicked off our summer with VBS. We had more kids and volunteers in attendance than we've had for several years. Hallways were filled with kids doing space walks as they learned to "Shine Jesus' Light." There was also an odd mix of goodbyes and hellos. For some families, this was their last VBS with us, which made the end of that week bittersweet. For others, it was their first opportunity to be involved in a broader chapel function. I got to know a few ladies, and I look forward to growing those relationships.

For the first time since COVID-19 broke out, we are hosting an intern for the summer. Stella is a military kid herself. She is the daughter of a Marine and was born in Okinawa. Watching her connect with students and share similar experiences with them has been fun. She'll be here for nine weeks and has fully jumped into the various roles.

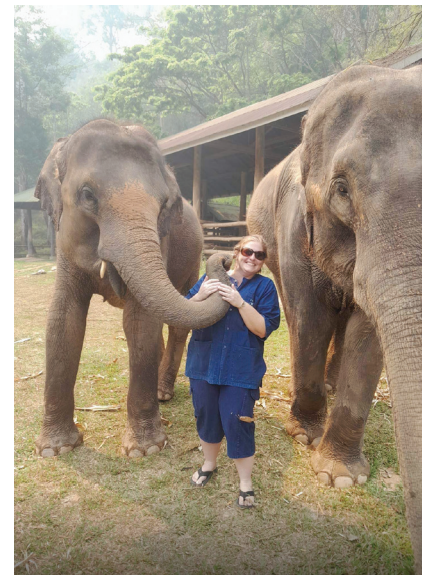
## LOOKING BACK

As I look back at this school year, there were many difficult moments. The loss of one of our students lingers, and I continue to talk with kids about Lauren and death. Nothing can prepare a person for the loss of a child. The community rallied behind the family, even after they left the island. The memorial service for Lauren is the only time in almost

eight years that I've seen our chapel filled to capacity, with standing room only and overflow seating. I spent a great deal of time praying for God's strength to get me through the service. Standing in front of that room and speaking about a child's life was one of the hardest things I've ever done. God's grace and Spirit filled the room as we mourned together as a community for one of our own. This is what the military community does: they support each other. Many didn't know Lauren but felt the need to be there. The gospel went out, and Lauren was remembered.

Another big event this year was our mission trip. Leading a trip like this was a first for me and brought about some challenges as well as heart-warming moments. We took moms, young adults, teenagers, and kids to Cambodia for a week. We caught glimpses of third-world living, including power and water outages, and we walked the streets of the slums. Our ladies put on a Women's Conference for the Cambodian ladies,

and our kids taught Bible lessons in a school. The most impactful moment for me involved bags. Last year, I had our VBS kids make jump ropes and decorate bags to give to kids in Cambodia. I had hoped to deliver them earlier in the year, but travel restrictions didn't allow it. We packed up these items



and brought them with us, along with some leftover kites and craft kits we had been given. The kids absolutely loved them! We could see them flying their kites in the streets of the slums where they live in utter poverty. They walked home from school carrying their new bags with messages of hope on them. During our time there, kids got to be kids and just play.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Now, as we look to the upcoming year, here are some things you can be praying for:

- **Transition of Chaplains.** There is still uncertainty about the replacement for our current chaplain who is leaving in July. Someone will likely step in as an interim preacher for the next few months.
- **Consistency in community.** Lack of consistency in preaching can often hinder people from committing to attending. We are working on plans to have programs in place that are led by people who are staying and have a heart to serve.
- **Softball Camp.** For the first time, my teammates are running a softball camp in August for teens. We are very excited to bring out coaches and reach students through sports.

Thank you for your continued support and prayers for our military community in Okinawa. I hope your summer is full of rest and rejuvenation. Thank you for allowing me to serve those who serve us.

Blessings,  
Sarah



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