

Reflections from South Korea

By Mr. Tim Salinetto

From October 30th to November 8th, I had the privilege of spending time with Beth McMichael in Seoul, South Korea. When I returned home, friends and family were eager to hear about my time there and each welcoming hug, text or call was accompanied by the same question... "Did you see any new birds?!" It's a fair question. I am an avid birdwatcher. And yes, I was able to add about 10 birds to my life list of over 500 species, including the Eurasian Magpie (top right) and Willow Tit (bottom right). But Seoul did something that few places I've visited before have done. With its incredible places and kind people, bird watching became an afterthought. In addition to some nice photos, I left with memories, experiences and friends that I will never forget!



Some of the incredible places...



the biggest spatula you've ever seen! The only ill effects from the ordeal were sore cheeks... from the laughter that ensued.

The Korean Folk Village was the highlight of our first full day in Korea. Accompanied by the students who will be traveling to Pittsburgh in January, Beth and I explored traditional Korean houses and enjoyed re-enactments depicting an ancient way of life. I was even lucky enough to be selected to participate in a scene that showed how criminals were punished during the Joseon period. This involved me laying face down on a table and receiving a paddling from what I would describe as

The Kindergarten at Duksung Women's University felt wonderfully familiar despite the vastly different culture and language. The rooms were filled with opportunities for play and the walls overflowed with the children's artwork. Materials and projects reflecting the current theme were everywhere. The teachers created learning experiences that allowed the children to access the thematic information in various ways. Even the teachers were familiar, as almost half of the staff had been to Pittsburgh before as part of the practicum partnership. It was an honor to be given the opportunity to observe and interact with the children alongside teachers who may have gotten inspiration from something or someone at The Children's School! In addition to a stack of artwork and an invitation for "100 sleepovers", I left this learning environment with memories of games played, Lego buildings constructed, snacks eaten and smiles communicating joy when words could not.





The Purumi Children's Center serves the children of those who work in the Seoul government complex and is managed by Duksung Women's University. I had an amazing time reading a story to the children and hammering golf tees into foam boards. The five-year-olds in the class quickly picked up the skills they needed to hammer the tees and were soon using the materials in creative ways! It was fun to work with them and also to sit back and watch them discover! In the pictures to the right, one friend made a chair with the Hangeul character for "chair" and another friend made a flower then colored the tees with markers.



The Seoul Early Childhood Education and Development Institute is an amazing facility that most closely resembles our Children's Museum. The building has rooms dedicated to cooking, woodworking, block-building and art, and on each floor there are experiences that allow children to play as doctors, construction workers, firefighters, newscasters, musicians, athletes, etc. The experiences are designed to promote social skills, language development, physical development and creative thinking in the children. Programs are also in place to educate teachers and parents. The institute was inspiring and added a few projects to my To-Do list!

All of these places would have blown away my expectations on their own, but they were made even more special because of the team of thoughtful and gracious people who made sure we were comfortable, informed and, among other things, well fed! There are too many names to mention them all, but a very special Thank You to Dr. Byungho (Tony) Lee, our primary host, translator, driver, and friend who coordinated our experiences in Seoul. A big Thank You also goes to Dr. Carver, as well, for offering me this opportunity and for the Children's School educators who made it possible for me to be out of the classroom for a week. I am forever grateful! Kamsahamnida!



Professional Development in South Korea

By Miss Beth McMichael

I was honored to represent the Children's School and CMU from October 31st to November 8th in Seoul, South Korea. Though I recently retired, I am still an educator open to learning new things. The culture, history, education, meals, and customs were all somewhat different from Pittsburgh.

Our first full day in Seoul, we visited a Traditional Cultural Theme Park / Korean Folk Village, which is a typical Joseon period village recreated on a 245 acre site with a river flowing in front of it and a mountain behind it. Mr. Salinetto and I were escorted by the practicum students from Duksung Women's University who will visit Pittsburgh in January 2016.



The Folk Village experience stimulated all five senses. We participated in the Folk game "Tuto" (stick throwing), ate at the Market Place Bibimbap (assorted vegetables mixed with rice), and enjoyed the Magi/Masangiae, a fancy horseback riding performance using martial arts. We also saw acrobatics on a tightrope, which was fascinating to watch. One of my memories was the experience of Government Office Implementation of Punishment. Mr. Salinetto was chosen from the crowd to demonstrate a traditional cultural experience, all in fun of course. He was paddled!



Mid-week we walked from our hotel, The Somerset Palace, to the Government Complex Daycare Center. The center's objective is to provide high quality education for infants and children up to five years of age. The facility is only offered to government employees in Seoul. My how I liked the indoor playroom for ages 3 to 5!



Our next stop that same day was the Seoul Early Childhood Education & Development Institute. Their hope is for everyone to experience a "Joyful Encounter, Precious Discovery & Blissful Future". The Institute's mission for young children, parents, and kindergarten teachers is to promote the whole growth of the young child by providing high quality programs and an environment that fulfills the needs of the consumers of Early Childhood Education. There are five floors in this educational building and I never wanted to leave. This experience was **AMAZING**, especially the Cooking Area and Outdoor Area (see next page).





Thursday and Friday, we were able to observe the Duksung Women's University Laboratory School on the university campus. The school is now thirty-one years old and has lovely, neat classrooms with learning centers arranged for small group interaction. The children have access directly from the classrooms onto the playground. The excited children continually greeted us with hugs, smiles, and art pictures for us to take home. Their daily schedule is similar to the schedule of the Children's School and their objectives and characteristics are much like our six developmental domains.



I felt the highlight of my trip was teaching a cooking class to the mixed age group of 3, 4, and 5-year-olds at Duksung Women's University Lab School. The children there knew very little English, but communicated by watching me as I demonstrated how to chop carrots, cabbage, celery, etc. and by singing our safety song "when you chop, hands on the top." The children smelled and tasted all the vegetables when they made "Stone Soup" and then ate the soup at the end of the day for snack. That made my travel worthwhile. Ten years ago, I made a videotape of children cooking in Extended Afternoon. Each day, I'd share the tape with a child, who would watch it at home with family and return it the next day. The last child, Youyou, took the tape home and never returned it. When I asked his mother, she said she had sent the tape to South Korea. All this time I thought, "Someone is watching me cooking in South Korea!" And now I was able to make that experience a reality - **Cooking with children in Korea!** Thank you to the Children's School for giving me these memories of a lifetime that I will cherish forever.