College Sixth Formers experience volunteering

During their first year at St Aloysius’ College Sixth Form, Birkillara, students are invited to take part in a 55-hour social responsibility programme, whereby students take part in various different volunteering experiences either in Malta or abroad.

Among the various options, 14 students chose to help in a two-week summer camp organised by the Sisters of Mother Teresa in Armagh, Northern Ireland, for 60 children aged between five and nine.

One of the students, Anne Farrugia, said learning to live with people she hardly knew and work with them was a challenge in itself, and that being in another country made it even harder, but that what came out of it was “the best reward in the world.”

Farrugia said seeing “the children smile, and knowing you are the reason why, is the greatest gift”. She added that the camp forged a lasting friendship among the volunteers as they had “come together for a common cause and shared the experience of spiritual growth”.

Another 15 students joined 336 pilgrims who visited Lourdes at the end of summer with the organisation Associazioni Volontari Lourdes.

One of the students, Gaby Gauci Borda, said it was rewarding to know they could be of some help. During their stay, the students listened to the experiences of many of the sick and their loved ones.

“It was impressive to see how they never lose hope and support each other through these difficult times,” she said. "Their courage and dedication was inspirational. It taught us to appreciate our life and be grateful for all we have."

She added that the students were amazed to see millions of people, some of whom were very weak, travelling long distances to gather in Lourdes to pray by themselves and with their loved ones in search of physical healing as well as spiritual and emotional peace. "Their devotion could be seen when everyone gathered in the grotto to recite the Rosary or to touch the holy rock, or during the breathtaking processions, such as the aux flambeaux."

"Their strong faith was visible in the long queues waiting to enter the sacred baths or to light a candle outside the grotto,” she said.

Promoting a healthier environment, lifestyle

Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School is currently taking part in a two-year Comenius project entitled Harmony for Earth, for Life, for People (Help) together with nine schools in Romania, Turkey, Poland, Portugal, France, Spain, Italy and Slovenia.

The project’s main aim is to promote environmental conservation and appreciation, as part of a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

Angelo Pulis, the school’s assistant head and project co-ordinator, and Samuel Stellini, Systems of Knowledge teacher and the project’s IT co-ordinator, together with students Luke Cucchiardi and John Charles Fenech recently took part in the 5th project meeting in Mont de Marsan, France, hosted by Lycée des metiers Robert Wierick.

During the meeting, the students visited the Oyster Museum at Bassin d’Arcachon, where they learned about the process of oyster farming. They also visited the sand dunes of Pyla to understand the effects of the weather on the shaping of the physical environment and the detrimental effects of climate change on the area.

The project meeting also included a workshop on alcohol and drug addiction, and another on global warming. In addition to the general and common aspects of these themes, the partner schools also discussed the particular contexts of each partner country. The outcomes of the workshops included posters and charts, which were later displayed in the schools’ corridors.

The students and teachers also visited Landes forest, which was devastated in 2009 by a storm named Klaus, to learn about the intense reforestation project currently under way, as well as to plant some pine trees.

The project is supported by the EU through funding from the Comenius Multilateral Action under the Lifelong Learning Programme. The Maltese participants’ attendance at the meeting was financed by APS Bank.