

Volunteer Stories

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Writer, Model, Art Curator

In February 2013, I was invited to the charity gala dinner of [Camillian Home for Children Living with Disabilities](#) as a reporter to cover the event in two online magazines I'd been doing freelance writing for: [coconutsbangkok.com](#) and [catandnat.com](#). At that point in my life I had been working in Bangkok for two years as a lifestyle correspondent and public relations consultant. Gala dinners and charity events were a dime a dozen in my daily routine and the thought of getting dressed up for yet, another wine dinner wasn't exactly the most exciting thing for me. I was hoping something better would come up, but nothing did, so I arrived at the Four Seasons just as first course was being served. I didn't get to mingle with all the guests since they were seated already, but most of the faces at my table were new. Sitting next to me was a long-time supporter of Camillian Home, a French man named Arnaud. He ended up bidding over 150,000THB for a pair of earrings by Italian jewelry maker Casato. It was such a thrill to be so close to the action that was taking place during the live auction. It felt as if everyone was really there for the right reason and that each bid increment was made with the charity in mind. This wasn't the kind of auction where people walked away with "bargains" like I'd seen so many times before.

After the main part of the event was over I got to talk to one of the Camillian Home committee members, Judith Coulson who told me something that really struck my curiosity and left a strong impression on me. She said there was a volunteer named Faisal Malik who had been helping Camillian Home full time for 3 years without taking a salary. I just couldn't imagine how anyone, especially someone so young could give up so much to do charity work. I didn't know it that night, but this man would eventually become my fiancé. A few months into dating, we took a trip to Chiangmai and I started thinking of ways I could help the Home. During my initial visit to the Home, I'd noticed that some murals were painted along the wheelchair ramps and they really brightened the place up. Since I'd begun my career as an art curator I was in touch with some artists so the first thing I did was start a project called "[Colors of the Heart](#)" in May 2013 where I invited artists to paint murals at the Home. Over the next few months about 7 artists came to leave their beautiful legacies on the walls. Today we are working on the second part of this project to bring another wave of artists to the Home.

To celebrate the completion of the first part of "Colors of the Heart" I decided to organize a [fun fair](#) at Camillian Home in September 2013. I remembered on the night of the gala dinner, one of the guests [Natalie Glebova](#) mentioned that the gala dinner should be held at the Home so that people who hadn't been there could have a chance to visit it. This was the main goal of "Colors of the Heart" – to simply give people a chance to visit the Home and have fun at the same time. The event came together nicely and I was able to garner support from all the people and companies I'd met in my two years of working in media and public relations in Bangkok. We had local musicians putting on an all-day long live show, food vendors, auction prizes, and many sponsors who helped to cover costs so that we raised a total of 240,000THB that day. Most importantly, people who never made it out to Camillian Home before actually came and got to know the Home on a deeper level.

In the past year that I've been volunteering at Camillian Home I've organized several fund-raising events, including the most recent "[Shop For A Cause](#)" Celebrity Jumble Sale at the [Dusit Thani Bangkok](#) Hotel in February 2014, and smaller events such as the [Christmas party](#) and [Valentine's Party](#) at Camillian Home. On a daily basis I take care of Public Relations by giving tours to visitors,

composing newsletters, managing the Facebook page and website, and getting my friends involved in different ways to help the Home. It's been so overwhelming how kind and generous people can be. Even those that I considered to be "party friends" or "Facebook friends" have ended up contributing in some way.

In May of 2013, I moved into Camillian Home and started renting out my [2bed2bath condo](#) on Airbnb.com. The income I make from renting my condo per night is more than enough to cover my living costs and add to my savings. I still take on writing jobs if they pay a good amount and don't take up too much of my time. Modeling has been going surprisingly well too, even though I've stopped going to castings, I'm still able to get high budget jobs at least once a month. I also managed to curate five art shows in eight months while being a full time volunteer at Camillian Home.

I know that many people are afraid to make the commitment to volunteer, but in my experience everything in life falls into place when you help others with a pure heart, and there are no sacrifices or compromises. I've gained so much more than I ever expected from my volunteer work here. I've learned so much about myself and my own capabilities; in fact I've actually increased my skill set. Before Camillian Home, I had no idea I could organize events, or edit a website, or that I could really make a difference in anyone's life. I feel privileged for this opportunity to help disadvantaged children living with disabilities. To see the joy on the faces and hear the happiness in their laughter and knowing that I played a role in giving them the best quality of life possible, that's what drives me to continue volunteering at Camillian Home.

<http://www.camillianhomelatkrabang.org/volunteer-story-yvonne-liang/>