



As a veterinary student, I can honestly say that my four-week stay at the Esther Honey Clinic on the lovely island of Rarotonga was one of the most educational and inspiring experiences that I've had. Not only did I gain some hands on practice in my field of study, but I also experienced the Rarotongan culture to its fullest as I was immersed in it day after day. The people were so friendly and generous and treated us "Honeys" very well. My time spent in Rarotonga will definitely be a cherished and looked back on with fond memories.

I was fortunate enough to volunteer at the clinic at the same time as five amazing veterinarians; one from Belgium, one from the Netherlands, one from Australia, one from the USA and one from the UK. They were all so eager to teach, which was paramount to me as a student. I was taught how to do so many things that I had simply learned in theory as well as review important concepts that I'd never had a chance to use in real life (as I had only just completed my second year of my DVM). This included placing IV catheters, giving injections, placing endotracheal tubes, prescribing the correct medicine at the correct dose while ensuring no drug interactions, and lucky for me, even a couple dog castrations! It was also very interesting to see fish poisoning cases, as I had never really heard of it until then. We were sometimes assigned a patient from the time it walked in our doors until the time it was released back to its owners or until it could be rehomed. This really gave the veterinary students an opportunity to see patient care from all aspect as well as enabled us to employ all that we had learned so far as well as pick up any new tricks that the vets could impart.

Due to the high number of volunteers that were at the clinic at the same time as me, it gave EHF an opportunity to continue the very valuable census of the dogs on the island. Although this meant that we'd have less days getting our hands dirty in surgery or on consults, it also meant that we got to see the island and its people in a totally different manner than we would have if we had simply been vacationing and visiting the tourist spots. The island people were always so friendly and constantly offering us fruit or drinks on those hot days. It was an amazing experience and enabled us to determine the percentage of desexed dogs on the island as well as give owners advice on their pets. The census brought in many animals that would otherwise not have been seen. The benefits of it were immense.

Not only were the animals, scenery and locals great, but the volunteers were also amazing. I made some lifelong friends during my stay in Rarotonga and many doors have been opened in terms of opportunities for doing rotations overseas.

All I can say is that I am very glad that Cathy Sue took that fateful trip in 1993 as it has not only enabled me to improve my skills and to have the experience of a lifetime, but it has helped countless numbers of animals! I would urge anyone interested in volunteering to go do so at the Esther Honey Clinic- you won't regret it!