

# Small Town, Big World: Love=mc<sup>2</sup>

By Britt Bensen Steele

I remember when I asked Bob, the man from whom we rented our house the first time we went to Bali for six weeks, "What should we do when we are there?" He replied, "Spend as much time as possible with the two people and their families who will be taking care of you." He didn't tell us to go to the monkey forest, or to visit the art museums. He said, "Stay home and get to know your Balinese caretakers."

The name for these caretakers in Balinese is "pembantu" and they are in nearly every western oc-

cupied home in Bali. These are the locals who care for the long-term tourists and they help navigate one's international journey by grocery shopping, making food, taking you to temples, setting up tours, and anything else you might need. One of our pembantus had two children, and at the time of our first visit, the daughter was 4 and the son, 10.

As we settled in to our new home, we found ourselves forming amazing relationships with these two children, Wayan, the boy, and Madeh. We'd sit together for hours after dinner while the light in the near-equatorial jungle faded. We'd sing, draw, laugh, and exchange hand massages (a very Balinese practice). Wayan would initiate some game with "something interesting," like a wooden stick with a mosquito and a rubber band on the end, or some ice and a piece of cardboard or perhaps a bag would be turned into a hat. Sometimes we'd paint finger nails together or practice Balinese dance, kid style. In all this, there were two constants with the little ones and ourselves: #1: we'd laugh. A lot. And, #2: we did NOT speak, for we did not

know one another's native language.

The language we spoke was truly "of the heart." We had nearly two months of evenings on the kitchen floor, and I fully believe that if we came across one another in the street somewhere somehow, we would laugh and dance right on the spot as a result of this six week "conversation" we formed in the tropics, and we would still not utter a word.

I often think back to our time living overseas and wonder how different, how limited, our conversation would have been if we would have used words. Instead, we spoke by spending time together, offering our innocence, and choosing to understand one another FIRST, and then concern ourselves (or maybe not) with being understood.

There's a poem by Radmacher Hershey that says, "I'm not the same having seen the moon rise on the other side of the world." And I have to admit, I'm not the same. The most important conversations are not those we "speak" but those we feel in our hearts, for words fall short and often go through a very murky, guarded filter. But the heart? The heart always reveals when given space and time to be seen.



## Rose City Motorcycle Club Food Donation

On June 20, the Rose City Motorcycle Club delivered 1,202 pounds of food to Vernonia Cares Food Bank. The Club gathers food and funds throughout the year to be delivered to the food bank. This year marks their 20th consecutive year of this service project. Project host is Den Bair who instigated this project in 1996 when he saw the food bank wanted to have extra food to give to those devastated by the flood.



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