



YAP CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

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YCHS Volunteer Program Frequently Asked Questions

Is English spoken in Yap?

Yes. Although there are many different “native” languages here, almost everyone can speak English. Students are required to speak English while on campus. (Their English language skills are quite good considering that they are ESL learners.) English is also spoken in the stores and in all government offices.

Where will I live?

Living arrangements vary slightly each year, depending on the number of volunteers. This year we have three volunteers. The volunteer community lives together in a house in the village of Nimar. We’ve used this house for six years. It has three bedrooms, a large common space, kitchen, washer & dryer (which work most of the time), internet (albeit somewhat slow), and a beautiful small deck off the back of the house. There are also some wonderful neighbors in this small cul-de-sac. The Nimar house is about 6 miles from school and about half a mile from the center of town.

If we have more than three volunteers, we also have a small house on the campus of St. Mary’s Elementary School and Church. This house has two bedrooms separated by a wall that goes almost to the ceiling. It also has a sitting area, laundry room, small kitchen, and a screened-in porch area. St. Mary’s is about a quarter mile from the Nimar house and a quarter mile from the center of town.

The school provides a car and gas money for transportation to school. Any volunteer with a valid US Driver’s License is able to drive in Yap by filing for a Yap State Driver’s License. Volunteers without driver’s licenses can learn how to drive and apply for a license here in Yap as well.

Will I have health care coverage?

YCHS cannot offer health care coverage. We ask volunteer teachers to stay on their parents’ coverage. We do have a fairly nice hospital here with a staff that includes certified doctors. Most hospital services are free. (There are small costs for an overnight stay, medicine, and ambulance rides.) In the case of any serious illness or injury, YCHS would fly the volunteer teacher to Guam to be treated at a hospital there.

Is there a support system in place for volunteer teachers?

Yes. We have a person who is designated as the “support person” for volunteers. (Currently, this is a Jesuit priest who teaches at the school.) The support person meets with the volunteers on a regular basis for dinner, faith sharing, and reflection. He also has ongoing, informal conversations with each of the volunteers. At school, the principal runs an orientation for volunteer teachers at the beginning of the year and also holds regular faculty meetings. Much of the discussion at these meetings centers on teaching and learning strategies. Teachers also meet with the principal for weekly one-on-one mentoring sessions.

What will my duties be?

Most volunteers teach three different courses. One or two of the courses may not line up with the teacher's background, but this has not been a problem in the past. Volunteers have enjoyed teaching new subjects – e.g. Micronesian Politics or Micronesian Government. Each teacher is expected to create an organized electronic file with all lesson plans, unit plans, and assessments. These files from past years are a terrific resource to help new teachers plan the courses.

Teachers are also expected to lead morning prayer once a week, help plan and execute Retreat Days and Days of Reflection, help coach sports teams and/or run activities, and run a homeroom (or proctor a daily Silent Reading or elective period). The school day runs from 8:15 – 4:00. The last 70 minutes or so is an extended Study Hall when students can get help from teachers as they work on homework. This is also when sports practices and activity meetings take place.

How long is my commitment?

We ask volunteer teachers to commit for at least one year, but we recommend two years. Those who have stayed on for a second year have really enjoyed “feeling at home” – mostly teaching the same courses, knowing their way around, and knowing the students and families. We've never had a three-year volunteer, but that is also a possibility!

Will I get paid?

Volunteer teachers receive a monthly stipend to cover personal expenses. They also receive food money (which gets pooled together) and gas money. In the past, one-year volunteers have paid their own airfare (about \$1,900 from the east coast) and two-year volunteers have been reimbursed by the school. (Some volunteers have successfully raised money on their own to pay for their tickets.) The school can help pay airfare for a one-year volunteer if necessary.

Is there much to do in Yap?

There are no movie theaters, malls, bookstores, etc. However, there are many very interesting “local” activities. Getting to see a cultural dance is a treat. (A number of YCHS students take part in these.) There is a Canoe Festival once a year. There is also a cultural festival call Yap Day (which actually lasts for 2-3 days). There are kayaks for rent, and there are two hotels that have small swimming pools. Many of the volunteers are runners, and some play in volleyball and basketball leagues at the Sports Complex.

Yap is also a well-known dive destination. Most of the volunteers have become certified in scuba diving. Yap is known for its excellent safety standards and is famous for its manta rays.

Can I receive “care packages” from back home?

Yes. One of the great perks about living in Yap is that the US Postal Service considers Yap a “domestic” address. So postage is the same as it is within the US. Flat-rate priority boxes are commonly used for “care packages” to Yap. Priority mail takes about 8-10 days to get here. (All USPS mail comes by plane – which is only twice a week.) Packages shipped parcel post (much cheaper) come by ship and take about two months. Volunteer teachers share a post office box. (There are no “addresses” here since the streets don't have names. Everyone has a PO Box and picks up their mail at the post office.)