

DAVI_ AND SH_RLEY

Teaching in Central Asia

In 2000, Davi_ and Shirl_y made a commitment to work for 12 months in Central Asia, teaching English.

Guess what? They are still there!

They thoroughly enjoy their teaching involvement (except perhaps when it is time to mark examination papers, grade the students and rush to get the results into the university office!)

But what really energises them is their interaction in less formal contexts. There are the informal group times when everyone gets to practise English with “real live English speakers.” The topics raised cover everything imaginable – the pressures students are facing in life, family expectations, politics, the meaning of cultural events both local and in Australia, the meaning of life and the latest music and fashion trends. Davi_ and Shirl_y often face a barrage of questions and are able to respond to them out of their diverse life experience and their understanding of life and its meaning.

There are also numerous conversations with individuals, many of whom come to talk about personal struggles and issues. Some people meet regularly with either Davi_ or Shirl_y, sometimes with both, as they explore together new stages and choices in their journey of life.

Both Davi_ and Shirl_y are working at learning the local language and practising it with their students and friends, and this gives them an even stronger bond with their community.

Davi_ has a diverse employment and education background, with experience as a manager of a community centre, TAFE lecturer, maintenance supervisor and, in more recent years, experience in the leadership of communities in WA. Shirl_y has a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education, and long experience as a primary teacher.

They write, “Teaching here is what we always dreamed teaching in Australia should be – not in terms of resources, but in teacher/student relationships. The students are very responsive and appreciate every bit of care and concern they receive, and repay us with their trust and affection. The experience has been unexpectedly addictive.”

