



Serving the UNDERSERVED

NEWSLETTER

June 2011

Volume 3, Number 5

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From Mike - 2011

The last newsletter you received was a review of the trip highlights "through my eyes." This newsletter contains highlights as viewed through some of the other team members.

Mike

Maia's thoughts (16 year old trip member):

[First day, travel] Today was rather interesting in itself. The plane ride was kind of a burden during take-off and landing. As well as while hitting all these air pockets over the mountains. My ears had to be popped like every 30 seconds and my stomach was making me want to throw up . . . the bumpy roads, driving through the mountains (more ear popping) and then lunch after all of that did not really help much.

[Second day] We went to the orphanage (Casa Samuel) today. The kids were very self-reserved at first but once we got like three or four kids going and comfortable, the others started joining in too. One little boy, Mike, tossed around a nerf football with me. Pretty soon the girls started clinging to me too. At one point, I had six of the kids sitting on the ledge and I'd go one by one and pick them up and spin them around a couple of times. They really loved that



Team departing the hotel for a day at the orphanage.



Maia, Pete, and Michael play with kids at the orphanage.



One of the little girls at Casa Samuel.



Children who live at the orphanage.



One of two security guards the orphanage had to hire for protection from thieves and gangs.

I really enjoyed the orphanage. It reminded me of Belle Glade [Florida] and the poverty. So I was kind of already aware of the circumstances and how to react to the situation. Yet the sight is always impacting to me because you will never forget the trip or the little kids and all, but you tend to forget how it feels to look at how they live and then compare that to the way you live. It's harder to remember all that while still living your daily life at home. That's why I always go to Belle Glade in the summer. I come back home changed but the world back home always has me slipping into my old habits. I definitely want to come back



Pete's thoughts:

"Give me Your eyes so I can see . . ."

Casa Samuel, "Because we love, we care."

[Second day] It's been a couple of years since I visited Casa Samuel. The last visit they were discussing building a new free standing kitchen and cafeteria /meeting area. The building is built, has electricity, however, the interior needs build out. As funds come in they continue to add on. They also built a free standing building where they cook on a fire stove. Finally, they have had to build a wall around the perimeter of the complex to keep thieves and gang members from entering the school and stealing and terrorizing the kids. These types of precautions are found throughout Guatemala.

One thing that didn't change was the expressions on the faces of the kids and the loving family atmosphere the teachers and caretakers have created for and with them. When you see them walking towards you in an organized group holding hands you so feel their love for one another and the bond only these children can understand.

"Give me Your love for humanity . . ."

“Give me Your arms for the broken hearted . . .”

It was an awesome day for everyone!! We checked the eye sight of the children and staff members and gave glasses to those we could assist. We also gave haircuts to those who wanted them. The kids thought that was cool. Finally, the Frisbees, soccer ball and the bunch of foam rubber footballs were a hit. We were playing non-stop for hours. It was a blast.

One thing I did notice was if you were to sit still for a moment the kids would come and climb and hang all over you. They wanted to touch you, run their hands in your hair, hug you, and speak a hundred miles an hour wanting or asking something of you. That was a cool feeling knowing that you have gained their trust in such a short period of time, it shows their hunger to be loved.

Some of the older children and staff members prepared delicious roasted chicken, coleslaw and tortillas for a late lunch. You could see on their faces they were happy we enjoyed the food. As the day was ending and we were preparing to leave, all of a sudden the place got real quite. The kids were in small groups playing and you could sense that they knew we would be leaving soon and their lives would be as they were hours earlier.

[Third day] Pastor Israel, Sean, Maia and I went to get paint and supplies. When arriving at Brillo Del Sol [special needs school], I noticed right away that a lot of work had been done in cleaning up the school area. They did a great job. We got right to work and cleaned and painted two classrooms pretty much by the

end of the day. It's amazing how a little paint can really brighten up the dark classrooms.

[Fifth day] It's Sunday and I'm sitting in the central park of Antigua as I write this; it's a beautiful spring day with hundreds of happy smiling faces. The kids are running around, some playing tag, others just running; you have young couples holding hands with their whole lives ahead of them and older people with years of



Orphanage kitchen with the fire stove for cooking tortillas and roasting corn.



Pete carrying the bag full of balls and Frisbees provided by a generous donor.



New kitchen at the orphanage that has been under construction for over two years, with work progressing as the funds are given.





Training the volunteer fire/rescue workers in techniques for pulling a down firefighter from a building.



Demonstrating how to position the down firefighter and tie the ropes for rescue. [Photo above and next three photos below.]

wear and tear, but free to enjoy the day. I imagine this scene in many places all around the world. Then I think, Casa Samuel seems so far away.

“Give me Your Heart for the ones forgotten . . .”

I know in my heart that all of us visiting Casa Samuel as we did, at least for a few hours that day, made the children happy and let them be carefree kids. I pray that we strengthened their faith and gave them hope and faith, in that there are people in the world who care about their welfare, and the hope that one day with God by their side they will have an opportunity for a better life.

Michael's thoughts:

[Second day] Yesterday's flight down was surprisingly uneventful. We got through security very easily. The only "hiccup" was one of our bags was left at MIA because the plane was overweight. We walked right through customs in Guatemala, which I've never seen happen before. They didn't stop us to look at any of the suitcases and didn't ask any questions. God definitely had His hand on us for the trip down. We spent most of the day at Casa Samuel. Right now they have 60 children who have been removed from their homes by Guatemalan authorities. Approximately 80% of the females there have been sexually molested. As we drove through all the small villages on the way to Casa Samuel I began thinking. Seeing the way the average person lives in these villages, houses made of any scraps they can find and dirt



floors, I couldn't help but think what the living conditions must have been like for the authorities to remove these kids from their homes. When we first arrived at Casa Samuel there were very few kids there, but a little while later the vans arrived and there were suddenly kids everywhere. Kids that ranged in age from just a few months old to teenagers. It took a few minutes of coaxing to get the kids to play, but once they started, they didn't stop. Pete brought footballs, Frisbees, and a soccer ball. Seeing the looks on the kid's faces, you would think he was Santa



Claus. We spent several hours playing games with the kids while the rest of the team gave eye exams and haircuts. As we were leaving, several kids brought the balls and Frisbees back to us as though we were going to take them all back when we left. They were very excited and a little puzzled when we told them they could keep it all.

[Third day] I spent most of the day with the Bomberos [firefighters] from Ciudad Vieja and the surrounding areas. They recently had a fire truck donated to them by the firefighters in Santa Maria. The truck was built in 1974 and, for the last year, sat in a field rusting. When they went to pick up the truck, they found rats nested in it along with various other animals. It took three hours to get the truck to start and another five hours to drive it home. The brakes did not work well, and the drive back to Ciudad Vieja is mostly downhill, out of the mountains. So in true firefighter fashion they got innovative. They tied a tow strap to an ambulance and let the fire truck lead the way, using the brakes from the ambulance to slow them both down. They fully restored the fire truck, fixing all the rust holes and painting it fire engine red. The problem they have now is they don't have any equipment for it. They have one 50' piece of hose and one nozzle - nothing else is on the truck. Most fire trucks have 1200' of supply hose to get water from hydrants to the truck, and 400' - 600' of hose that's a smaller diameter to use to attack the fire. They are in need of ladders, axes, halligans, pike poles, chain saws, spanner wrenches, hose, nozzles, and fire fighting turnout gear. Even without having any equipment on the truck, you can tell this was a huge accomplishment for them and one they are very proud of.

[Fourth day] I spent a second day with the Bomberos from Antigua, Ciudad Vieja, and a few surrounding areas. Around 20 firefighters were there for the training session. I was able to teach them new techniques in rescuing a down firefighter and removing them from a burning or collapsed building. They were once again very enthusiastic about learning and once we were done for the day, they said this was the first time they learned any of this. I was able to present them with equipment from Plant Today to aid them in their duties. We gave them 10 cervical collars, fire fighting gloves, numerous patches from fire departments and fire stations in Palm Beach County, and a large stack of "Fire Engineering" magazines. After the

day was over and they took me back to Pastor Israel's church, Chief Carlos began telling my dad and me how much Plant Today has changed his life. He specifically pointed out how my dad had been an inspiration for him to pray more and now he is living the life of a Christian.

Continued from Mike . . .

In about two weeks we will send you the next newsletter with thoughts from other team members. I hope the pictures and the words touch your heart as they have mine.



Life through the eyes of a little boy at the orphanage.

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