

NICARAGUA

LOCATION: SEBACO

TEAM SIZE: 5 STUDENTS

TEAM LEADER: 2 STUDENTS

DATE: JULY 23-AUGUST 12



Sleep head-to-toe on two-inch-thick mats, six or more to a room; eat the same food day after day after day; shower down the hill in a river; exercise by hiking up hills carrying 90 lb. bags of cement! Doesn't sound like a vacation, does it? It doesn't really sound like any kind of comfort zone, but it is what the missions team to Nicaragua signed up for and experienced during their end-of-summer trip.

It may not have been a vacation for the fifteen trip members, but it was busy. During the first week they helped with the construction of a church building in a rural community in the mountains. In the second week they visited several churches, participated in their worship services, painted church buildings and facilitated a training session for pastors.

But it is not the difficult living conditions or the busyness that the 15 team members will remember most. It is the Nicaraguans themselves. "The people we worked with were so thoughtful, caring, and heartwarming," says

current junior Ashley Perrett. Junior Katie Sparks adds, "Nicaragua has God's presence everywhere. There are so many people who live their lives just for God. Time and wealth are not an issue for them. They live every day by what should be done."

And it wasn't just the people in general. In spite of the language barrier, team members were able to connect in unique ways with individual Nicaraguans as well. Ashley Perrett became friends with an 11-year-old girl named Leti. They practiced their English and Spanish on each other, and they experienced a special time together near the end of the trip.

"I found out through my hand signals and my limited knowledge of Spanish that Leti liked to sing, just as I do. I pulled out a sheet of English and Spanish worship songs. It was so awesome to be singing, 'Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord' in Spanish with a special friend and sister in Christ."

The team was also impacted by the poverty in Nicaragua. During a lunch break at a small restaurant they noticed a small boy standing outside watching them. They asked him to come in but he would not. Finally one team member took part of a tortilla outside to him. He accepted it and then was willing to go in the restaurant. Ben Swihart, current senior, gave him the rest of his meal and a drink. The boy ate the food as if it were a Thanksgiving meal, and the team realized that meal may have been the only food the boy was going to get that day.

When the team left Nicaragua after two weeks, they not only left a country behind, they also left friends—brothers and sisters in Christ with whom they had shared love. Team leader Melissa Yarrow sums it up well, "We were able to mutually encourage one another in our faith and that was a beautiful experience."

Nicaraguan Team Members: Adam Beutler, Caley Chestnut, Krisha Harshfield, Dr. Henry Lederle, Scott McCaulley, Jordan Miller, Stuart Parman, Ashley Perrett, Nate Prior, Stacey Rosenberger, Katie Sparks, Ben Swihart, Don Wagner, Zack Yarbrough, and Melissa Yarrow.

