

San Jose Brigade Trip: Fall 2011

A trip with a whole lot of doctors and a social worker!

Brigade Description from Hombro a Hombro

- The University of Rochester brigade was comprised of 2 attendings, 7 residents, 2 medical students, and 1 social worker. They spent their two weeks stationed in their affiliate community of San Jose, San Marcos. Through furthering their relationships with the community, they also oversaw many projects. Several of these projects include latrine building, cookstove building, a scholarship program, a microfinance project, and fish farm building. Their trip was complete with many meetings as a means to support existing projects and to discern possible ways of expansion in the future. Brigade members also saw around 100 patients in the clinic, attended to patients through home visits, hiked to the neighboring community of Las Delicias to oversee a partnership there, met with the scholarship students, and traveled to local schools to do a project with the classes and to give a health talk about proper injury care. The brigade stayed at the local school and at the newly built volunteer house, both complete with beautiful views of the mountains and surrounding areas. Through all of their hard work, the University of Rochester and the First Unitarian Church have clearly had a positive influence in San Jose and this relationship will continue to foster change in the future!

(<http://www.shouldertoshoulder.org/blog/index.php>)

So, Where is San Jose, Honduras?



A Bit of Background Information...

- Rural community; houses mostly accessible by foot
- 3000 people living in the 7 communities of San Jose
- Individuals live on approximately \$1/day
- Subsistent farmers
- Lenca Indian
- High illiteracy rate
- Generally quiet demeanor
- Hard-working men and women
- 2 seasons each year: wet and dry
- VERY hilly!



So what did Kirsten do to occupy her time while in San Jose?



School Curriculum Teaching Sessions: Collage Autobiographies

- A curriculum (“Collage Autobiographies”), developed by members of the First Unitarian Church’s Honduras Task Force, was presented to and completed with students from 4 elementary schools in San Jose. This small group project was worked on with students in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th grades from the San Jose Centro, Portillon, Guanacaste, and Potreros schools.





In total, approximately 138 students participated in the creation of Collage Autobiographies, which were collected by Kirsten to take to Rochester to present to children there. Almost all students (even the oldest!) were very receptive to the project, though it took some initial prompting to have them utilize their creative juices.



“Recuerdos”

Students and teachers from the four schools seemed to appreciate the fact that Collage Autobiography examples from children in the United States were left with them to keep as a “recuerdo.”

6th Grade Scholarship Applications

- A meeting was held for 6th grade scholarship applicants from the five elementary schools of San Jose. In total, 26 students (most with their parents) attended, with representation from all 5 of the schools.





Kirsten reviewed all necessary scholarship information, including how scholarship recipients are chosen, where funds come from, what funds can be used for, and when/how selected students will be announced. After Kirsten relayed the details of the scholarship program, all students lined up to obtain and fill out their questionnaires.

While the students filled out their sheets, parents were called up one at a time to fill out a financial information form with various brigade members.



Scholarships for Colegio

- Two meetings were held for current scholarship recipients from the 7th, 8th, and 9th grades. Kirsten and Marvin Cacho (Shoulder to Shoulder representative) lead these meetings, and utilized support from other brigade members when collecting completed paperwork and answering questions. In total, 19 students attended one or both meetings and turned in the required paperwork.



Kirsten was alerted that 4 students from the 7th grade had left school (2 of which later followed up with Kirsten about their departure from school), as well as 1 student from the 9th grade (the mother of whom also met with Kirsten to discuss her daughter's departure). Students in the 8th and 9th grades were presented with letters from individual donors and photographs were distributed to each child.





7th, 8th, and
9th grade
scholarship
recipients
and parents

Tutoring Program for Scholarship Recipients

- A meeting was held with Santa Froglan, the new tutor for scholarship recipients and a teacher at the Portillon school, about the educational progress of the students, where tutoring sessions are being held (which is currently in the volunteer house), his intentions to continue sessions, and the details of his attendance sheets.
- Following this meeting, Kirsten and Maggie Kennedy provided Santa with some school materials for tutoring sessions (including notebooks, pencils, and rulers).

Curriculum Teaching Session with Elementary School Teachers

- A curriculum teaching session and English lesson were planned and scheduled for elementary school teachers; unfortunately, only one teacher (Felipe) attended, so Kirsten briefly presented the curriculum to him. Felipe reported that various factors, including the recent rainstorms, upcoming deadlines for teachers, and a scholarship meeting in La Esperanza, had prevented the teachers from attending despite their knowledge of the meeting.

What Else did Kirsten do to occupy her time?



Meeting with the 9th grade girls to discuss possibilities for carrera and to request that they develop a budget proposal sheet for their continued schooling.





Put up signs to announce upcoming meetings for scholarship applicants in El Horno.



Checked out other projects that are being developed with the help of brigade members, such as fish farms (pesceras).



Spent time with some of my
favorite kids!





And hiked...



and hiked
some more...



...and some
more!!



Until next time, San Jose...

For More Information...

- Please visit:
 - <http://www.rochesterunitarian.org/Honduras.html>
 - <http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/family-medicine/global-health/>