

St. Joseph's Mission Trip – 2015





March 7, 2015

Author: Rich Haney

And we're off....



And the adventure begins to the world of Mission in the Dominican Republic. We are here at Ft. Lauderdale airport thanks to our wonderful drivers Mike Mahady driving the GSS (Gulfstream School aka God Send Saints) school bus, and Gary Matthews, Ralf Gudat, and Charlotte Lees in their chariots. Thank you all! We're boarding. Talk to you once we're over the pond. Nosotros vamos con Dios! Xo

2 thoughts on "And we're off...."

1.  **Michael Mahady** says:

[March 16, 2015 at 6:35 pm](#)

So glad that the team and luggage arrived safely. I look forward to reading your blog posts daily. I wish I was along with all of you! ¡Buen viaje!

1.  **Wendy Tobias** says:

[March 16, 2015 at 10:20 pm](#)

We do too, senior.

March 16, 2015

Author: Wendy Tobias

And we're here!

Hola amigos! We made it.... all 21 of us.



We were greeted at the airport right on time by staff from our hotel who weren't concerned at all with piling our luggage up so high in the back of their pickup truck. All bags made it to the hotel, we were glad to see. We settled in our rooms and then had a delicious lunch.





Since this was our travel day Fr. Sandino picked us up for a brief visit to the nursing home to visit with the patients and assess projects for our work tomorrow. Their leaky roof will be a big job but as Fr. Sandino always reminds us, "If the Lord is willing and you are willing we will do this." And do this we aim to do. "This" is scrubbing a flat concrete roof and then applying a coating that will, hopefully, seal it up. We'll work in shifts and when not on the roof we'll be working with the residents and also doing some indoor painting. We're excited to be able to give them the many supplies we brought as well as clothes lovingly created for each resident by our Sassy Sewers.



Each days begins and ends with a closing circle where a different team leads us in prayer and we share highs and lows of the day. We prayed for family and friends and for God's guidance and blessings on our work this week. Early bed night for a long day of work tomorrow. We give thanks for the privilege of our work this week and our time of fellowship with one another. Thank you, St. Joseph's family and beyond for your support of our Mission trip!

March 17, 2015

Author: Wendy Tobias

And now the work begins...

What a day we had. First of all here's Juan who is our trustful, cheerful bus driver for the week:



And then on the bus



We arrived at Hogar Obispo Episcopal which is just this little haven for the indigent elderly in Boca Chica. We support them through our Outreach fund. Barbara MacKenzie, our parish nurse has been down here on numerous occasions and has revamped their nursing system with wonderful results. All of the residents are showing improvement except for a new gentleman. We were able to deliver to them all of the wonderful gifts we purchased thanks to the monies raised in the Italian Dinner Fr. Marty facilitated some time ago and the generosity of those who attended:



On this table are outfits for each of the residents lovingly purchased or made by our Sassy Sewers as well as large bibs they made. There are sheets, towels, multivitamins, gloves, a medical supply box with stethoscopes and a blood pressure cuff, Therabands for exercise, and a little doll lovingly crocheted by a friend of Barbara's. We gave it to Julissa who is developmentally delayed and she just held it so close and stared at it as if she'd received just the best thing ever.



We did a photo project with the residents and made new picture identifications outside each of their rooms, thanks to Debra's smooth leadership. We painted their dining area and common area. Meanwhile, the leaky roof we checked out yesterday was getting its first coat of sealant under the able direction of foreman Bob Lees:



He and his crew (which was just about everybody who rotated shifts up on the roof under the hot sun) used this sand like mixture mixed with water. We sent money down for the material and Fr. Sandino needed 15 bags of it to completely seal the roof. He could only find 13 bags after visiting ten different stores all over the area. Yesterday, when we visited, he said, "Let me pray. The Lord will provide the two more that we need. There is no problem." And so guess what? We walked in the gate and here's what we saw:



Pretty cool, eh? Manna from heaven. We applied the first coat, after really cleaning the area and it now must dry for a while. A second coat will be applied. As if this wasn't enough work we also painted the front wall inside and out:





Debra led everyone (residents, staff, and us) in taking new photos of all the residents and staff for display which brought great joy to everyone.

We came back to the hotel exhausted but inspired and so grateful that we have the privilege of serving in this sacred way. Our prayer team of Savi, Grant, Allie, and Debbie led us in beautiful closing prayer. Our youth shine with the brightness of God coursing through them. Love that.



I would be remiss if I didn't give a shout out to one of the co-owners of our hotel and also our head chef, Marta! A saint in our midst for sure. She is so lovingly preparing our meals and Packs us a picnic of sandwiches each day. We are being nourished in more ways than one



PS: I need a tutorial in doing this blog. Hope the layout improves after consultation from some of our oh-most-wise techno kids. Looking forward to a good night's sleep.

3 thoughts on "And now the work begins..."

1.  **Michael Mahady** says:

[March 17, 2015 at 10:42 am](#)

Wishing you all well in your endeavors. You are an amazing and talented group! Let your light shine!

2.  **John Carpenter** says:

[March 17, 2015 at 2:51 pm](#)

Looks like the crew is off to an amazingly productive week! Thank you for this blog and photos so that we can follow your adventures.

3.  **Mary Wright Baylor** says:

[March 22, 2015 at 7:48 pm](#)

I am so happy to see Julisaa and the nursing home. That is holy ground.

March 18, 2015

Author: Wendy Tobias

And Then the Village Of Gautier...

The San Jose School bus arrived at 9am but we were delayed waiting to be able to speak to customs at the Santo Domingo airport when they opened. Once we left for Gautier there would be no internet available. Our trial experiment of shipping boxes to the DR instead of paying for 2nd checked luggage has been a learning experience. We still don't have our 13 boxes of uniforms and shoes that we shipped. We left for Gautier hoping they'll be released later today. We'll see.

We arrived in Gautier and began with prayer in Fr. Sandino's church, Santo Tomas:



Then we walked through the streets. These women are typical of an everyday Gautier street scene. The conditions are deplorable though most of the locals are so joyful and so happy to see visitors.



Our tasks today were to paint two houses and then spend all day tomorrow painting one that is a larger project. But then the plans changed and we ended up doing all three in

one day. What was so heartwarming is that our entire team was so willing and so hard working. They just kept painting and painting and with the greatest attitudes.





The neighborhood children just gather around in droves so hungry for attention and loved playing with the bubbles Deborah brought. They were so excited. We sure can take for granted the simple things. Seeing these people with so little and yet so appreciative of anything is inspiring indeed.



Some of us took a much needed lunchtime siesta.



These pictures were reality... no posing.



The puppies found in the backyard of the last house we painted were a big hit. And all were gratified by our work. Here's the single mom that owns one of the houses posing with a few of us and our worker friend Alvaro.



What a great day. Praying our boxes arrived safe and sound. Giving thanks!

March 19, 2015

Author: Wendy Tobias

And So Grateful We Are Here...

Alisson and Sophia greet the morning:



Sunrise is magnificent here on the largest natural lagoon on the island.



Good morning Steph and Lucy. Everyone's gearing up for another long work day in Gautier. Before anything, though, we have our prayer circle each day. From the first day with our prayer leaders Savi, Allie, Debbie, and Grant we were guided in beautiful prayer and yoga stretches by Grant down on the beach. Yesterday, in honor of St. Patrick's Day our prayer team of Sylvia, Lisa, Phillip, and Cheryl had us doing an Irish jig and then beautiful prayer and poem. Today, Bob, Joann, Shannon, and Sophia led us in prayer stretches and beautiful scripture and prayer down on the beach again and this evening

we experienced a powerful prayer circle of lighting the candle of the person on our left and saying how we saw them shine on this mission.



Unfortunately our boxes are still hung up in customs. Fr. Sandino even went down and signed and still no boxes. That delay didn't stop us from heading back out to Gautier though.



We ran a photo project for the third year back by popular demand. We photograph the children and then help them decorate a frame while they are waiting for our small but mighty printers to work.



You would think we were giving them a million dollars the way they were so appreciative. Many have no photos in their homes at all and these photos give them an opportunity to celebrate themselves and their families. Sadly, though, we never have enough and the children crowd the front gate and hang outside reaching in through the windows.

We also delivered part of the donated uniforms and shoes that weren't in the shipment boxes. We'd packed many in our checked luggage, thank God. Thanks to donations of uniforms from SJS, Gulfstream School, Unity School, and Sunshine Uniforms plus shoes from SHUZZ we provided an opportunity for many of these village children to attend school.



After another exhausting day we headed back to the hotel for dinner, that beautiful prayer service, and then a surprise from Julio, one of the staff of our hotel. He led us in some fun community builders and then meringue dance lessons which led into a relaxing and joyful close to a very good day. Christ shown so very brightly today, my sisters and brothers in the Lord, so very brightly.

March 20, 2015

Author: Wendy Tobias

And Back To Boca Chica We Go...

Our sacred time here continued this morning with our prayer circle in honor of our patron saint, Joseph, led by Stephanie, Lucy, Alisson, and Kazuki. They told us a bit about Joseph identifying three qualities he exemplified: Compassion, Dedication, and Faith. We were then asked to notice how these gifts manifest in our own lives this day. They led us in a gentle sunrise Salutation down on the beach and closed in a prayer.

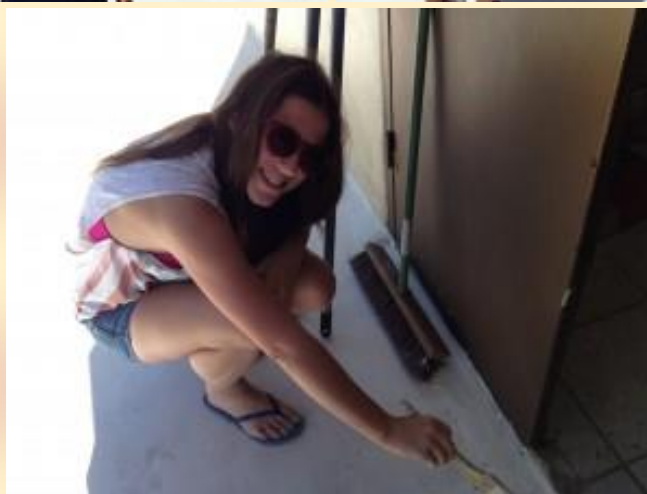
Compassion, Dedication to the work of God, and Faith in love, were so very evident today as we returned to Obispo Hogar Episcopal, the nursing home for the indigent elderly in Boca Chica.







Compassion in our interaction with the residents and Dedication and Faith in completing the sealing of their leaky roof:



And Faith in having fun with two very different cultures... St. Joseph's and San Jose in a volleyball game... just knowing that our interaction would unite us even more and it did!



And we were tired...



Then, back to the hotel to write our collects, and gather photos for our Sunday morning celebration with all of you. We took time for some fun, a great dinner, and planning for tomorrow's prayer times and activities. Parade tomorrow! (And hopefully our packages will arrive, but then that's another story...)

2 thoughts on "And back to Boca Chica we go..."

1.



Michael Mahady says:

[March 20, 2015 at 11:27 pm](#)

Outstanding work at Obispo Hogar Episcopal! Your photos with the residents warm my heart. You are working miracles both big and small every day! What a bright light you all are in the world!

PS...Just out of curiosity are this kitchen doors still on the hinges?

1.



Wendy says:

[March 22, 2015 at 11:11 am](#)

Most are not! thanks.

March 21, 2015

Author: Wendy Tobias

And Now Fiesta De San Jose

On this our last full day in the Dominican Republic we began, as always, with our prayer circle led by today's worship leaders Olivia, Debra (with Allie's help too), Manolo, and Ken. We then left for to celebrate San Jose Day with Fr. Sandino's school: Colegio Episcopal San Jose School and the people of Boca Chica. We arrived in their town center to wait for the festivities to begin:



Big shout out to Sylvia Jimenez here on the far left and Manolo Rivera, third from left, for being our translators all week. I'll bet they'll be glad not to hear people calling their name every five minutes. They were just great.





That's the school bus there behind Grant that transported us all week driven by our trusty driver and friend, Juan.

The celebration began with the presentation of the wreath at the founder's statue by students from Colegio Episcopal San Jose:



And then the parade through the streets with dancing and flag waving



We ended up back at the school for games with the students





lunch provided by Ysabel and the professors.



And guess what? Our boxes arrived!!!



Fr. Sandino will be sure that the uniforms and shoes get to Gautier school to add to those we were able to deliver ourselves that we'd packed in our suitcases.

We then returned to the hotel for some much deserved free time at the beach. Fr. Sandino and Ysabel came for our last night's dinner and expressed deep gratitude to all of us, the parishioners of St. Joseph's, and all who supported our Mission trip. They had to leave before our closing prayer circle which included a moving story by a man named Julio, an alum of an organization here that works to protect children from exploitation. He'd been a 'shoe shine boy' as a child, not attending school. His meager earnings went to support his very large extended family. The organization helps children and their families break away from children working the streets, vulnerable to all kinds of dangers, and helps get them into school. Julio now works with the street children of Boca Chica. We all were then pleasantly surprised and inspired by Ken singing us a song. (I think I'd like to introduce him to a man named David Clyde Morse.

What a great group. We have had not one harsh word, not one disagreement, and all worked so very hard and with such servant hearts. May get in one more post from the airport! Thanks again for all of your support!

