

TRIP REPORT
MARCH 10-18, 2017
Abilene Christian University to Chichicastenango
Team leaders: David and Susan Mellor

Team members: Drs. Sky and Louise Forrister, along with 2 of their teenaged children Shelly and David. ACU students: Shelby Pelleran, Stephanie Ariles, Hailey Burden, Cody Bly, Whitney Brantley, Olivia Dahl, Gaby Summers, John Swartout, Abby Heyen, Mason Andrews, Henry Touchton, Kristen Brehm, Austin Browning and Faculty advisory, Dr. Diana Flanagan.

Friday, March 10: The ACU team, led by Dr. Diana Flanagan (PhD) arrived late Friday night in Guatemala City and were transported to Hotel Barcelo for a good nights' rest. This team was composed mainly of pre-med, pre-nursing and pre-dental students. They were joined by Drs. Forrister who are a husband and wife team of family practitioners from Llano, Texas. Ironically, they had worked in Chichi 30 years ago on a mission trip with Dr. Mike and Julie Kelly. It was a joy to see their reunion after all these years. Dr. Louise brought her journal from that trip and compared notes from then to now.

Saturday morning, after a good breakfast, we left Guatemala City and began the journey to Chichi. We stopped along the way for lunch at a Swiss restaurant (!) which served Guatemalan cuisine, specializing in locally made cheese. It was another interesting experience and everyone seemed pleased with the delicious meal. Because of space, we couldn't stay at our normal hotel, Santo Tomas, and were required to go to Casa del Rey for the first few nights. We found the accommodations large and comfortable and the food was wonderful.

On Sunday, Kemmel has arranged for us to worship with the youth worship which is normally held twice a month at Canton Xepacol. Noe Chan (HTI's acting physical therapy provider) and his singing group helped organize this service, with Noe directing our thoughts in a lesson and others singing and praying. There were approximately 60 young people attending in the age range of 16 - 25. We had encouraged our group to blend with the Guatemalans and they did a great job. After worship service, there were mixer games and Kemmel had ordered pizzas to be delivered (who knew there was pizza delivery on the side of a mountain, up a dirt road in Guatemala?) This was the first time for many of the kids to taste pizza and they enjoyed it thoroughly doused with ketchup. The ACU students were impressed with the fervor and spiritual joy they saw this day. We returned to Chichi, packed up and moved to Hotel Santo Tomas for the remainder of the week.

Monday, bright and early, we headed out to 4 communities. The Forristers were a huge asset in seeing so many ABC students. The ACU students were given a chart and took each ABC student to each station of the clinic visit (chart, vitals, medical, dental, pharmacy, photo). By using this "round robin" method rather than just giving the students one assignment, they were able to follow the complete cycle of treatment. Mike, Sky, Louise and Lisa were all complimented by the students on how instructive the doctors were with them.

Tuesday and Wednesday there were more clinics so the process was continued. One interesting thing happened at Clinica Caris; a woman came to see Lisa with pregnancy complications. The witch doctor told her the problem was that she was not carrying a human baby, but an animal baby! This poor young woman was overcome with fear! Dr. Lisa was able to not only reassure her, but show her a sonogram photo of her very human infant. The baby cooperated by waving at the camera!

After praying with this young mother, she was flooded with gratitude and God was certainly glorified!

Wednesday two teams were sent out to deliver water filters, allowing these students to visit the homes of those we serve. This project allows the students to get a better picture of the cycle of service we perform. In the evening devotional there was quite a bit of discussion about the day and how humbled and blessed we all felt to be able to deliver clean drinking water to these homes.

Thursday began a roller coaster of sickness. One by one many on the team dropped with some sort of stomach distress. Pills, injections and chicken soup were delivered and for most of the folks it was a 24-hour problem. We were sorry to hear that Julie Kelly and Kemmel's mother, Roberta were even brought down by this bug.

Friday was the day to travel to Antigua, but many were leery of driving on the curvy roads and no immediate restroom facilities. We soldiered on, putting the "sickies" in one van and the more recovered in the other. We stopped a few times on the way, but most slept. It's hard to see a group of high energy college students this lethargic, but Antigua, with comfortable beds and bathrooms was a welcome sight. I hope whatever brought us down is finished with our groups for a long time.

The students were very responsive in the evening devotionals. They always wanted to stay and sing, and Dr. Flanagan held them to a 10 pm curfew since morning comes too early for those who don't go to bed until the wee hours. They mentioned the fact that we pray with all of our patients frequently in our devotionals; they were encouraged by that. Also, the youth worship being so uplifting was mentioned. The home visits to deliver the water filters probably had the biggest impact on the team.



Real life in Guatemala was witnessed!

It was a good week. Lives were changed, memories made. God was glorified and we were blessed.