2012 August Trip - Sue & Friends

Subscribe to posts
Day 5
posted Aug 21, 2012 3:25 PM by Ernie Begin

It was our last work day in the Dominican today. We started the day by buying high blood pressure medicine for a woman in Hoya Clara with dangerously high blood pressure. Robyn took her blood pressure yesterday and told her that she gets headaches every day.

Then, we visited a school in the mountain village we visited Wednesday. School is not in session yet, but the teacher came and invited all the students to meet with us. We sang songs with them, and made bracelets. Then, we gave them all some school supplies. We also left a bag with the teacher of supplies he can use for his lessons. He teaches 1-4th grade for all the children in the village. The older children have to walk a long way to continue their schooling.

We also returned to the clinic in the village with the medicine we bought them on Wednesday. They were very happy to have more supplies to provide the villagers with proper care.

Then, we went to Wilson's grandmother's village. Wilson had to give his mother insulin. We gave blankets and first aid kits to other families in the area.

On the way home, we went to a beach called Macau. It is a beautiful beach not many tourists have access to. Wilson ordered us fish that was caught from the beach earlier that morning.

Tomorrow we are heading home. Thank you everyone for your prayers and support, they were much appreciated!!
Day 4
posted Aug 21, 2012 3:24 PM by Ernie Begin

Today was quite an adventure! We went to Hoya Clara, a remote village that was once flourishing. Now, most people have left to work at the airports and so the people left have a hard time sustaining their community. We brought them supplies to build a garden so they can grow corn and beans and become more self-sustainable.

There is no real road to Hoya Clara, so we had to ride on the back of a truck and trek down a very hilly dirt road. We were ducking for tree branches the whole way. The road ends before you reach the village, so we had to hike the rest of the way.

The village itself is beautiful though! Well worth the journey. And the people have a great need since they are so off the beaten path. We gave the children clothes, and toys, and made bracelets with them. We also gave the teacher a cart, so that she can go throughout the villages to the spread out homes and reach all the children who need an education. The men will start work on the garden this week. Robyn and Kim also took the blood pressure of the adults in the village so make sure it was not unhealthily high. They were very appreciative and fun to hang out with.

At night we went to church with Joel and his family. Joel runs a program for the kids before the service that we also attended. They sang songs, like "Father Abraham" in Spanish, and then we made bracelets with them too. Robyn explained how each bead on the bracelet represented a part of Christ's story. She told the children if Christ's love made them happy, this bracelet could serve as a way for them to share that with other children.

At the actual church service, they invited us up as guests to introduce ourselves. Sue sang a vacation bible school song and the rest of us acted as her backup singers. Even with the language difference it is always possible to share our love for God.

Tomorrow is our last day out so pray for us! Pictures of our adventure today will follow tomorrow!

Blessings,

The Dominican Team
Day 3
posted Aug 21, 2012 3:24 PM by Ernie Begin

We just got back from a very long day. We spent most of it in Wilson's village. Wilson lives in a very poor village in Higuey. First, his wife made us a very traditional Dominican dish of rice, beans, chicken, and two types of plantains. Then, he invited the children from his village over and we set up arts and crafts to do with them in his backyard. We had them make necklaces and bracelets with beads and the kids loved it! Some of them would have made 10 bracelets if we had time.

After the beading was done Robyn sang Christian songs with the children in Spanish. The rest of us set up a table with school supplies. As each child left we gave them a bunch of supplies to take home, like pencils, pens, crayons and markers. We gave the parents first aid kits to take home.

We also met a preschool teacher who lives in the village. She runs a Christian school and her husband is a pastor. They told us that what they need the most is bibles for new believers who want to learn more about Christ. Robyn immediately gave them her Spanish bible and we are hoping to bring more when another group comes in January.

After dinner we went with the missionary we met at the hotel to visit the Haitian community he works with. He runs a program called, "Children for Christ" that helps Haitian immigrants who have fallen behind in school catch up. The program wasn't in session tonight, but all the students came to meet us. They sang and danced to Dominican praise songs. We brought them all supplies and toothbrushes.
Day 2
posted Aug 21, 2012 3:23 PM by Ernie Begin

Today it was hot! So we spent most of the morning sorting and organizing through all the supplies that were generously donated to us. Now, we have a plan of who to give what to when we go into the villages and to various schools later in the week.

We are planning to build a garden in Hoya Clara, a very poor, secluded village, later in the week. Hopefully their ability to grow beans will help their community become self-sustainable. Today we did a lot of planning for that, too. We figured out what tools we would need from Joel, our Dominican friend who works with the children from Hoya Clara. We went to the hardware store and ordered the supplies we need, like hoes, seeds, chicken wire, wood and hammers. It will be delivered to Joel's house later in the week so we can bring it to the people of Hoya Clara.

We took some time to rest and rejuvenate today, too. While we were on the beach we met a Haitian missionary who works at the hotel during the day and teaches Haitian children who are not allowed to go to school here at night. He invited us to join him at one of his classes tomorrow night. We are planning to bring him school supplies and help him out tomorrow with his work.

We are praying that the weather is slightly cooler tomorrow, so we have energy to accomplish a lot and truly make an impact while we are down here. Keep us in your prayers too!

Blessings,

The Dominican Team
Day 1
posted Aug 21, 2012 3:23 PM by Ernie Begin

Yesterday we arrived safely in the Dominican after a long day of traveling. Today we set out and started working. Wilson, our trusted taxi driver and close friend down here picked us up and took us all over. First, we went to a clinic in the mountains we visit each trip to ask the doctor what medications they needed. He gave us a long list, including glucose test strips to use with a diabetes test we bought them last year! The doctor was very grateful. He said the government sends him supplies, but sometimes they just end up being empty boxes. This is frustrating because the people in the village end up suffering.

We also visited a family we met last year that also lives in the mountain village. The mom told us all she needs right now is uniforms for her children. We took down their sizes so we could help her with this small, selfless request.

Then, we went to visit Wilson's grandma in the hospital. She has diabetes and hasn't been able to get insulin, so she is doing very poorly. We had brought insulin for her from home and wanted to make sure she got it today. The hospital they had her in was very sad. We also gave her a blanket because there was nothing, not even sheets, on her bed there.

After that we went to Wilson's house where his wife kindly made us lunch. His family was excited to see us and showed us all the changes they've been making to their home. One of his neighbors approached us and told us his wife miscarried a baby and was in a lot of pain. All she wanted was tylonel for her pain, which we were happy to offer her.

The rest of the afternoon was dedicated to shopping. We bought school uniforms and shoes for the family we met up with earlier in the day and for Wilson's children. We also went to the pharmacy to get everything the doctor asked for at the clinic.

The weather has been rainy since we got here, but luckily it's made it not too hot for work. Keep us in your prayers this week– we have a lot more work to do!
Blessings,

The Dominican Team August 2012
2012 January Trip
The January, 2012 trip is our largest yet with 9 people going. The focus this year is the creation of micro-businesses in the form of small internet cafe's and a sustainable small crafting business.

Day 7
posted Jan 15, 2012 4:07 AM by Ernie Begin

Our final full day involved something new for this mission; manual labor. Earlier in the week, Wilson told us that he needed to build another room in his house because his whole family was sleeping in one room, on one bed. Wilson has done so much for the mission over the years, so we decided that we would help him out in purchasing some of the materials. We told him we would help build and he thought we were joking. We were not. We got everything coordinated so that the materials would be delivered on Friday morning and said a prayer that it would happen.

Our day started with breakfast at 7am and Wilson's arrival at 7:30 so we could beat the morning traffic. We arrived just before 9am and much to our delight, the concrete truck showed up mere minutes later. The guys helped take the bags of concrete mix off the truck and quickly following that, the truck with the concrete blocks arrived. There were 800 concrete blocks (6 palates worth) to be removed from the truck, so we got to work quickly. The workers told us what to do and appeared to be surprised that 'little white girls' were so willing and able to help. We sure showed them. As did the little boys who were taking blocks from the truck with us. As we were moving the blocks, the professionals began to lay them down with the concrete. We asked to help, but they had their system and told us it would be best if we just watched. No problem. Another job that we were able to help with was being the manual concrete mixers. Just mix, water and a shovel. It was interesting to see the systems they had to get everything done in their own way, without machinery.

At one point, a few of us took a walk down the street to see the boy Edward who we had taken to the clinic earlier in the week. He was walking around and the wound looked much better. He said he felt better and that he had gotten 5 Penicillin injections so far! The other person we got to talk to was the woman whose house was threatened by the bank. She was extremely grateful that we were able to help her out.

After we had finished all the work we could do, Wilson's wife made us a delicious lunch - with American fries! We got to play with the children for a little longer and then it was time for us to go. Alberto did not want us to go. He tried to tie Helen and Jen to his house and kept telling us it was $50 to be able to leave. They were able to break free and we piled into the van. Just before we left, Alberto came up to the van and convinced Wilson to let him come with us. We arrived back at the hotel and said our teary "See you laters" to Wilson and Alberto.

The evening ended with Joel and Elizabeth coming to the hotel to say good bye and make plans for next year. We talked for a long time about potential plans for the future and about his goals for his new bible study. Joel explained to us that in the past when we came he was grateful for what we do but this time with the visit to the families in Hoyo Claro he really felt like we were able to help those in the most need and start something that could truly begin to make a lasting difference. We all agreed that the places we have gone in the past; the mountain school, clinic & families, Wilson's grandmother's village, Wilson's house in Higuey are important to us and we want to continue to support them but we felt called to expand our mission and spend more time in Hoyo Claro.

The time for goodbyes came too soon, and yet again the tears came as we hugged Elizabeth and Joel but we know we will be back soon because there is much work to be done.
Day 6
posted Jan 12, 2012 5:55 PM by Ernie Begin [ updated Jan 12, 2012 6:03 PM ]
We started the day off by moving back to the Occidental Flamingo Hotel from the Ocean Blue by the Sand. We then went to Joel and Elizabeth's house where we and were met with a large all terrain vehicle to go and meet new people at an unexplored area 30 minutes from Verone.

We were able to adventure down to this location with a truck barrowed from Carlos, Joel's friend. We brought food, medicine, clothes, and vitamins to the new area by the lake. Carlos was very excited to show us the area where he had lived as a boy when it was still thriving and had its own baseball team. When tourism became the biggest industry on the island, people were drawn to coastal areas where there was plenty of job opportunities. None of us had any idea of how remote this area would be until we had to jump out of the taxi and climb into the back of the truck ducking out of the way of trees as we made our way over the rocky terrain. There is no electricity or water, but seven families still lived off the land. We walked down to a crystal clear pond that is part of a preserve. A large thatch roof pavilion where we gathered and divided medicine,clothes, and food among the families. They raise cattle, goats, and chickens; every house has a dog to protect the house and chickens.

There is no school for the children and they very rarely leave the area. It is quicker to use burros for transportation rather than walk. This area is by far the least developed that we have seen while on our mission trip. One of the men from the village is suffering from diabetes and has been without medication for a very long time- we were able to get insulin for him before we left. The grandmother asked us to bring back school supplies so she could teach the children in their small community since she has no teaching implements as of yet. This area is potentially a good place to camp on our next mission trip and we would all like to spend more time there in the future.

On to the preschool, which was closed for a long holiday but the children gathered and soon the teacher, Linda, came and was extremely excited to see all the supplies we had brought for her school. The barbed wire fence around the school has fallen down and needs to be repaired. We gave out a lot of toothbrushes, toothpaste, clothes and school supplies and saw many happy faces from last year. The children liked that they got their own box of crayons and paper Two more schools at 4PM (drive by gifting) then off to the beach which has become extremely developed- which we were not that happy to see since we liked the solitude and not the crowds.
Day 5
posted Jan 12, 2012 5:45 PM by Ernie Begin
As a sidenote to our post from Sunday: At the end of church, a man came forward asking for prayers and support because he had an enlarged heart and needed to have more studies done to find out what the problem was. We paid for him to have a study and the first month of medications he needed for what we believe to be congestive heart failure.

Back to today...
Our first stop was Wilson's grandmother's house/store and the village across from it. We greeted his grandmother and set off down the dirt road into the village. The first person we saw was the man who had the sewing machine and it appeared he was doing well for himself. We walked further down the road and found the family that had the baby who was 5 days old when we came 2 years ago. He is now 2 years old and running around. Jen and Kim went to see his mother and she was in one of the houses working at a nail/hair salon (one nail station, one hair station). A group of us walked to the end of the road and saw that the land down there is now being used for farming, which helps sustain the community. We walked back up the road to Wilson's grandmother's house to hand out the supplies we had. Everyone got a toothbrush and toothpaste and we were able to hand out a lot of clothes and medicine. While handing out supplies, the old man we had met in years past came over with tears in his eyes because he was overjoyed that we had returned. Once we had handed everything out and chatted with our old friends, we headed on our way.

Next, we took the long ride up the mountain to the school, clinic and the family we met last year. When we arrived at the school, the teacher was very happy to see us. We were able to give him a lot of school supplies, including calculators for all the children in his classes. Last year, the teacher was having difficulty breathing and we gave him the only thing we could find to help; liquid albuterol. This year, Jen was able to bring him an inhaler that he could take every day to help prevent asthma attacks - there were enough puffs to last him months. We also noticed that he only had one side of the frame on his glasses in tact - they were balancing on his nose. We were able to give him some money to help him purchase a new frame, which would only be about $20. After we had handed out pencils, sharpeners, toothbrushes and toothpastes to all of the kids, we were on our way again.

Our next stop was the clinic. There was a new doctor again (which we later found out happens yearly). The first thing we all noticed was how much more organized the clinic appeared. Helen and Kim were excited to see that the containers we brought last year were being used. Jen was quite impressed with the new doctor. She knew English pretty well, seemed organized and the clinic was well stocked. We asked what she needed and she was honest in saying that she had most of what she needed because she had recently gotten supplies from a hospital, but she did need cough and cold medicine and new thermometer. We were able to give her some, but we did not have too much. She was thankful for what we were able to give her. There was woman came to us to tell us she had hypertension and needed medication. The doctor told us she has the medicine but not enough to give her everday like she needs. Jen found out the name of the medicine and will hopefully find some at the pharmacy when we go.

Our final stop in the mountains was to see the family we met last year. One of the little girls in the family had seen us at the clinic, so she went to tell everyone and they were all waiting for us when we arrived. One of the first things we noticed was that they were using the cookware we bought them last year. We had specifically bought them food and chose clothes for them from the donations. We gave them all to the mother and she put them in her house. We divided the rest of the rice and food supplies we had bought at the supermarket into ziplock bags for all of the families that came to see us while we were at their house. Before we left, they excitedly asked when we were coming back.

Our last stop of the day was at the painter's house. The little boys recognized us from last year and were excited to see us. Laying in their yard was the soccer ball we brought them last year. Joe and Helen got a chance to kick the ball around with one of the boys. The family let us into their house and they asked us to get a group photo. We were able to give them clothes, shoes, school supplies, mosquito netting and some food. A few of us purchased beautiful paintings and hand carved/painted parrots from the painter. The end of a long day.
Day 4
posted Jan 11, 2012 6:04 AM by Ernie Begin [ updated Jan 11, 2012 6:17 AM ]

The day started off with Joey, Wally & Ernie heading with Wilson to the wireless store to buy the internet equipment for Joel and Wilson. The others stayed behind to pack because we had to move everything to the other resort in the morning.

The group with Wilson went to the first wireless store, Viva, to find that the equipment we wanted was no longer available and the monthly cost was more then originally thought. The salesmen said he had a friend that could get us the equipment and he would call us. When we got into the taxi, Wilson suggested we go to Orange (formally known as French Telecom). The store was just across the street and they had exactly what we wanted for less per month. It took us a while at the store, but we met lots of interesting charecters like a California man who moved down here and one of the men from the airport who tried to help us get through customs.

When we arrived back at the hotel the luggage was ready so we packed it up with Wilson and Sue who went off to the new hotel while we waited and set up the new wireless.

The major destination for the day was Wilson's house in Higuey. We had a lot of school supplies for the local children, as well as clothes and some shoes. When we arrived at Wilsons we were immediately overrun by children. We also quickly noticed that Wilson had started trying to build a cement holding tank for water that was 8' x 10', but because of flooding earlier in the year it had filled and there were fish and other things living in the water. Wilson explained that water was very expensive to buy by the jug and that he needed a place to store more water. We will see what we can do to help.

After a few minutes a woman came from a house down the street and told Wilson that men from the bank had come to her house and told her she would have to leave if she didn't pay what she owed. We talked to her and she explained she has not paid in three months because her boyfriend left and there was no work, but she had work now selling food on the road. She needed $250 to stop the bank from evicting her and her children. We told Wilson we will see what we can do to help.

At this point Helen and Kim came to find Jen because there was a 14 year old boy named Edward who had been in a motorcycle accident and his leg was severly infected. He could hardly walk and appeared to be in a lot of pain. Jen found some Motrin and gave it to him for the time being to help the pain and swelling. We quickly ate the wonderful lunch that Wilson's wife had made us, bought some ice cream for the 40 children, and got back in the van to bring Edward to the clinic.

We dropped him and his mother off at the clinic and went to the supermarket since the doctor would not be back for an hour. At the supermarket we bought supplies for some families that Joel and Elizabeth know that live "off in the woods" away from the roads. We also got some cookies for the pre-school.

When we arrived back at the clinic, Edward had seen the doctor and he had drained the wound and given him some anti-biotics. Wilson knew the doctor, so the whole thing only cost $14. We brought the family back to their house and we were off to Joel's house because at the store we had bought a cake for Christopher's birthday on Wednesday.

We had a nice visit with Joel and Elizabeth, they were very excited to have the internet and to see our new webpage. It was getting late so we had to get to the new resort to check-in.

The new place is great, but the internet is very expensive so we will post when we can.
Day 3
posted Jan 11, 2012 6:03 AM by Ernie Begin

Our day started off with Wilson being right on time for the first time... only he forgot to bring his family so he had to go back to get them from Higuey. Joel and Elizabeth came with Elizabeth's brother Sam and his wife Judy, who got married over the summer. Altogether once Wilson got back we had 20 people at the hotel. It was a fun day of playing with the kids at the pool and watching Wilson eat his weight at the buffet.

We also had time to talk about our plan for the week and to catch up with Joel. Joel mentioned that he respects his current church very much but he wants to start teaching more and focusing on keeping the teachings simple. Because of this he is considering seperating from the church. He was concerned that this would mean that we would not continue to come and work with him since we had started the mission with the church. We explained to him that although we would continue to help his church, we felt called to help and support him in what he felt called to do for God.

We had brought an Amazon Kindle for Joel that had biblical teachings pre-loaded. We gave it to him and explained how to use it. We also exchanged gifts with all of the kids who were very excited.

When we returned to our rooms at the end of the day there was a note saying that the hotel was looking for people to change resorts because they are overbooked. The note said that in exchange for moving they would give us 7 free nights to use within a year. We jumped at the chance and will be changing hotels tomorrow. This meant that we had to pack up all of the stuff in the bags we had just unloaded, so we spent the night organizing and packing.

We are all excited to go to Higuey tomorrow and see Wilson's house.
Day 2
posted Jan 9, 2012 7:03 AM by Ernie Begin

Today was a catch-up day. After the drama about the bags we got to the hotel to find that our rooms werent ready so they upgraded us temporarily. This was nice because they were nice rooms but it also meant we couldn't unpack until we got our perminent rooms.

Eventually our rooms were ready and we took three golf carts filled with our bags to the closest room. There we spent hours sorting and organizing all of the provisions. We will post pictures of everything, it seemed like a lot more when we unpacked it in the hotel room then when we orginally packed it at the church.

We had told Wilson we wanted to go to church today at 6:00pm, but 6:30 rolled around and still no Wilson. We called him from the lobby phone and found out that his Taxi had broken down and he wouldn't be able to make it. At this point we asked the hotel to get us a taxi that took us to the church, which meant even with trying to leave so much earlier this year we were late again.

The church service was very moving even though we didn't understand much. They welcomed us warmly and Joel stood up to introduce us. We were even lucky enough to see the sister of a girl that Sue met on one of her first trips dedicate her baby. Towards the end of the service a man stood up and started talking, Joel explained that he had just found out he had a problem with his heart and he was asking for a special offering. Afterwards, Joel and Ernie went and talked to him to see how bad the condition is and what he needed. He explained that he needed more tests and that he would be going tomorrow to the city of San Pedro. Joel gave him his number and asked him to call afterwards to let us know how the tests went.

**It ends up that even though we came a lot earlier this year there is another school holiday tomorrow so we invited Joel and Wilson's families to the hotel for the day. It will give us time to see the kids and to plan the week. We can also go to the local Viva wireless store and start setting up the wifi hotspots**

**Day 1**

**posted Jan 8, 2012 6:46 AM by Ernie Begin**

Our trip started out very smoothly, we left the church around 6:30 to head to Boston. We flew out of Boston this year because it was less expensive and it was a direct flight. Peter Das and the LaRochelles were kind enough to drive all of us and Ray drove the truck with all of the bags. We got lucky at the airport and we were checked-in, baggage checked and through security very quickly. Our flight was uneventful and we arrived at Punta Cana right on time. It took the normal hour to get through the line to our luggage, and thats when the trouble started.

Because of our suspicious amount of donations, all in army duffle bags, we were flagged by customs and made to go into a special line. The inspector started to go through our bags and then called his boss who was a surly man who kept repeating that we needed a letter in order to bring donations. He said that he would have to take the bags until we produced this letter (he gave us no details on what was supposed to be in the letter or who it was supposed to be from or to). At this point we called Joel, the local pastor we work with every year, and Joel talked to the inspector on the phone. We also called Wilson because we needed all the help we could get. After refusing to leave the bags for another hour the inspecor we had been dealing with left and a new inspector came on who was much nicer and explained that the letter needed to be typed in spanish from the organization we were working with in the Dominican. The new inspector said we had an hour to get the letter or she would lock up our bags.

The put everyone into motion. Sue and everyone took our personal luggage and took the shuttle that had been waiting for us to the hotel. Ernie stayed behind at the airport to meet Wilson and Joel. Eventually Wilson arrived and talked to the customs people and then called Joel. Joel had gone to his church to get a letter from the church office that said the donations were being brought as part of a mission for his church. Wilson brought Joel to the airport where he gave the letter to customs and they released the bags. We were just able to fit all the bags into Wilson's van. We eventually arrived at the hotel and stored the bags to deal with tomorrow.

Thank god for our friends here in the Dominican!