



FREE

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Oakland church group spends 10 days at Nicaraguan mission

by Mark Huard

In the summer of 2009, Living Water Community Church in Oakland became aware of a Maine family serving as missionaries at Campo Alegria in Rivas, Nicaragua. Living Water began planning to assist Campo for 10 days in April 2010.

By September 2009, seven church members responded to the call. In addition to team leaders Pastor Mike Nerney, of Winslow, and Youth Pastor Larry Jordan, of Sidney, the team included Pastor Mike's daughter Jordan and son JonJon, three of Pastor Larry's daughters – Sara, Hannah and Christa – as well as Kayla Davis, of Winslow, and Jon Pinnette, of Sidney. In November, the team added two more, Mike Vashon and his son Logan, from Winslow. The team spent eight months preparing through prayer, raising the \$1,250 per person, and cultural preparation. They even shared a Nicaraguan meal together with their families the week before departure. When it came time to head to Logan Airport, in Boston, early on April 16, the team was ready.

When they arrived at Campo, they hit the ground running. The team split up into two groups, one for construction work and a second to paint a cabin. The group stayed at Campo Alegria, a year-round camp run by mission teams and located on the shores of Lake Nicaragua in Rivas, Nicaragua. As a team they accomplished many things: they built a bodega (storage shed) from concrete blocks, mixing cement by hand; organized the "Poptoria" – clothing store that provides cheap and free clothing to the locals; painted a bunk house, taught EFL (English as a Foreign Language) to adults and teens, and ran a children's camp to provide hope and love to children who live in a dump in Granada, Nicaragua.

Interacting with the Nicaraguans was energizing, first during the week with the EFL classes and then during the weekend kids camp. Though the days were jam-packed, they woke each morning to a peaceful, beautiful, and refreshing sunrise

The group provided hope and love to children who live in a dump in Granada.

members had ever had. What a fitting end to their 10 days serving at Campo Alegria in Rivas, Nicaragua.

After returning to Maine, Mike Vashon described the team trip with his son Logan as peaceful, rewarding, and uplifting. One of Vashon's favorite parts of the mission was interacting with the Nicaraguans, who refer to Americans as the gringos and to themselves as the Nicas. The EFL classes



The group from the Living Water Community Church, in Oakland, that recently traveled to Nicaragua included, front, from left to right, Sara Jordan, Christa Jordan, Kayla Davis, JonJon Nervey, Logan Vashon and Jonathon Pinnette. Back, Pastor Larry Jordan, Hannah Jordan, Jordan Nerney, Mike Vashon and Pastor Mike Nerney. Contributed photo

carrying 400 cinder blocks to the building site. Then the boys stirred concrete by hand and delivered buckets of fresh concrete to the guys who were building the storage shed. The work was exhausting, yet the team pressed on. Each night, the team would get together to pray and share in a Bible study.

Part of the team also spent the days teaching English to a small group of Nicaraguans. Day one brought nine adults. However, by Day four, they had 29 adults eager to learn English. Learning English provides hope of employment for the locals. Their English teaching team consisted of three youth and three adults, each of whom took turns teaching new vocabulary. It was so exciting to hear the locals speaking complete English sentences by the end of the week!

The final weekend was the most intense. On Friday afternoon, 21 children from the city of Granada arrived at Campo Alegria for a weekend of kids' camp. For the next 48 hours, the team's schedule was packed solid with games, crafts, swimming, English teaching, Bible studies and four chapel services. Sunday afternoon, the leader who brought the kids to camp told the team that their group wished to express their gratitude

that lead into basketball games, soccer games, and a Nica vs. Gringo baseball game gave the visitors wonderful opportunities to spend time with the adults and teens from a local village, San Jorge, connected by the beach to Campo Alegria. It was uplifting to share English and Christianity with them. The trip ended with a weekend kid's camp for the kids from a Granada dump. The Living Water team was fortunate to have assistance from another mission, El Puente (The Bridge). They knew the children and, of course, could speak Spanish. Vachon says that he cannot describe in words the rewarding time spent laughing, playing, learning, and praying with these kids. They organized art classes, games, EFL classes for kids, and Bible studies. The kids also had a blast riding a zip line and swimming and playing in the lake.

Vachon was especially moved when the kids and the missionaries from El Puente washed team members' feet. He shared, "It was the most humbling experience of my life and full of emotion. This mission journey will have lasting memories and effects in my life and my son Logan's life."



The group in Nicaragua with Isla de Ometepe, a volcanic island in Lake Nicaragua, in the background..

Contributed photo

behind the Isla de Ometepe (a volcanic island) in Lake Nicaragua.

The intense heat (mid-90s with high humidity every day) made the work stressful. The construction work involved first

to them. They sat the team of 11 in a line of chairs and then proceeded to wash each person's feet. Foot washing is a biblical act of servanthood. It was the most powerful and humbling experience any of the team



Nicaraguan children wearing Winslow baseball T-shirts. Contributed photo