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Willing Hearts, Ready Feet

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Willing Hearts, Ready Feet

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Office of University
Communications

April 22, 2015

By: Emily DeVries, GWU Communication Student

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. –“It was the best and the hardest week of my life,” said one Gardner-Webb student of her recent spring break experience. Cassie Helms and Amanda Rymer were two of seven Gardner-Webb University students who participated in a life-changing mission trip to Honduras during their spring semester break.

In March, Helms and Rymer joined GWU Associate Minister of Students Neal Payne and five other students to spend five days backpacking in the mountains of Honduras. As part of a partnership with Louder than Words Ministries, the goal of the trip was to bring the message of Christ to the remote villages of the Lenca people, some of whom had never even seen Americans before.

“I was really drawn to the idea that the emphasis of the trip was simply hiking and carrying the Gospel, nothing else,” shared Payne. “Just getting to each village is as much the mission as what we do when we arrive at the village. The fact that we go through so much physically is probably more of a witness to the people than anything else.”

Prior to their departure Cassie Helms, Amanda Rymer and the rest of the team (Amanda Collins, Natalie Green, Sarah Guynes, Lydia Hill, and Dee



Amanda Rymer (left) and Cassie Helms

Lowery) had prepared both spiritually and mentally. They trained for the physical strain of the trip as they hiked outdoor trails and football stadium bleachers with their loaded packs. However, nothing could have fully prepared them for the challenges they would encounter.

“Before I left, a friend wrote out scripture cards to serve as a source of encouragement for each day. As I carried my hiking pole in one hand and that day’s scripture card in the other, I experienced the idea of clinging to scripture in a very real way,” Helms explained. “When I felt discouraged or fatigued I would hold the card tighter, reminding myself of the promises of God written on them.”

Each day, the team rose at 4:30 a.m. to get an early start on their hike in an effort to try to beat the heat. In order to reach a new village every evening, the team hiked up to five miles a day. For Helms, the journey didn’t get easier as the days passed. The longer they were there, the tougher it was to push past the fatigue and stay motivated in their purpose.

“On the fourth day of the trip we were hiking in weather of over 100 degrees without the slightest breeze and we were literally down on all fours using our hands to claw our way up,” said Rymer. “For me, it was by far the toughest moment of the trip, but also the most rewarding as we reached the mountain’s peak and in any direction you turned you could see out for miles. It was the most beautiful view of the trip.”

During their time in the villages, they had the opportunity to teach English in one of the schools and to play many soccer games using balls they brought for the children. In the evenings, Helms, Rymer and their team shared music and sermons, as well as personal testimonies.

A special moment for Rymer came unexpectedly. “We ended up at a village we didn’t intend on visiting,” she recounted. “That evening a woman from the village was praying and she thanked God for the mountains, the stars and her American friends. It all reminded me of how small I am and how vast God is. The whole experience was incredibly humbling.”

Despite the great difficulties the team faced, both girls describe their week as one filled with real-life examples of God’s plan and provision. “It was a huge part of my time in Honduras,” said Helms, “in everything from the strangers who loaned us their trucks to carry people up part of the mountain on the hardest hike, or a breeze coming from out of nowhere on a day deadened by dry heat.”

Rymer agreed, “There was no plan, but everything happened just as it needed to.”