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Alumna Katie Axelson Shares Experiences as World Race-Latin America 2014 Wraps Up

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Office of University
Communications

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By: Katie Axelson ('11)

It happens every month and there's no way to avoid it. You swear it's not going to happen next month but then all of the sudden it's time for that awful moment of final hugs and tearful good-byes. Saying good-bye 11 (or more) times was one of the reasons I didn't want to go on the World Race.

It stinks. Except that it also means you've had a good month, built strong relationships, and left a part of your heart in that country. For the most part, I'm ok with good-byes... until we get in the car to leave.

Or until last month, when Lacey rearranged herself on me four times to leave five different sets to tear stains on my shirt.

Lacey lives in a dangerous part of Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Her future is bleak. At 11 years old, she spends all day hanging out on the streets. It's only a matter of time until she learns she can make money there. I don't want that future for her. I want her to know how special and loved she is—by us, but more importantly by God.

So I told her. And that's when I started crying. They were hard tears. They were good tears. They were obedient tears. And a half an hour later, they started flowing again for the same reasons.

This time I'd said good-bye to our bodyguard Fabio, the Honduran who stayed with us every night and day for a month.

Fabio

He rescued us from the chicken that invited itself into our room. He took us to the homes of children whose stories broke our hearts. He loaned us his mother so we could learn to cook baleadas. He teased with us, danced with us, talked with us.

He was our big brother.

And he's going to continue to work in this community even though we're leaving.

God didn't start working in that community when we showed up and He surely wasn't done the day we left.

As I reminded Fabio of this and thanked him for his willingness to serve God and this community, the tears started coming again.

He gave me the "come here" hand motion and held me as I cried on his shoulder and whispered in his ear about the goodness of God and the work He's doing here through Fabio.

I'm leaving (for now) but He's not.

And that's what makes saying good-bye worth it: knowing His work is being continued well beyond when we pack up our packs.

The God who hand-crafted each of these youngsters is surrounding them with believers who live there to invest into them while we're connecting new locals in another country.

The teary good-byes just mean you've given everything you have and left another piece of your heart behind. And it's good.



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/OoAzhjWyBb8>

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University's purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and

leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).