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GWU Mission Trips Help Spread the Word of God Across the Globe

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Office of University Communications

April 30, 2014

Written by Alyssa Gutierrez, Communications Intern

Students Spend Spring Break Serving and Ministering

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – As a university with a large-scale commitment to service in both the local and global communities, Gardner-Webb places a particular emphasis on missions. The call to help others was answered this semester, when four separate groups set out from Boiling Springs during the Spring Break holiday. With trips to Jamaica, Nicaragua and Honduras, Gardner-Webb students relished the opportunity to spread the Word of God and also help with various projects in the towns and villages in which they stayed.

Two separate mission trips were sent to Honduras. Neal Payne, associate minister to the University, led the first trip, which included both physical and spiritual challenges. Students backpacked over 30 miles through five villages in western Honduras as they shared the gospel with the native Lenka populations.

“We backpacked in to these villages where they had not had someone other than Hondurans visit for several years. We shared the gospel, testimonies, gave out soccer balls, played with the children, showed the ‘Jesus’ film, and encouraged the believers that were there,” said Payne. “We ministered to people we would meet on the trails and roads.”

The group partnered with Honduran believers and pastors to help them reach this population.

“I got through the hike by the grace of God. Everyone’s encouragement and positivity went a long way,” said senior Faith Kempf. “God gave us energy and light. Also, the girls [on the trip] wrote ‘somos soldados de Cristo’ on our arms. So even if we were just walking by people on our hike they would know that we were there to see them and that ‘we are soldiers of Christ.’”

The second trip to Honduras was specialized for American Sign Language (ASL) students.

Led by ASL professor Bob Moore, the group worked with students and teachers at the Happy Hands School in Tegucigalpa. In addition to signing, they also helped with basic construction around the building.

The mission trip to Jamaica, which was led by Dr. Eric Davis, senior pastor at Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church (Shelby, N.C.) and his wife Teresa, administrative assistant for the GWU Office of Christian Life and Service, found its most meaningful ministry opportunities in the St. Ann's Bay and Lime Hall area, which is an hour-and-a-half outside of Montego Bay.

Once the plane touched down in Jamaica, the group went directly to an orphanage to begin serving those in need. They spent time in corporate worship with the Lime Hall Baptist Church congregation before witnessing to the people in the surrounding neighborhoods.

"We met many folks just by stopping and talking to them," said Teresa Davis. "We also led Vacation Bible School for three days at the Lime Hall Basic School working with three, four and five-year-olds."

The students that went on this trip also got the opportunity to help serve and minister to patients in St. Ann's Parish hospital.

"We also had the opportunity to work in a state run infirmary for folks who had no one to care for them," added Teresa. "It was such a blessing to minister to the patients as well as doctors and nurses!"

Gardner-Webb sent a fourth mission trip to Nicaragua, which was led by Spanish professor Dr. Ben Coates. The group was able to focus on ministering to kids ranging in age from elementary to high school and even participating in several service projects that included some light construction.

"My absolute favorite part of our trip was going to the different schools in Palacaguina. We spent a couple of days at different elementary schools and then one afternoon in a high school," said junior Lydia Fuller. "At the elementary schools, we just had fun with them and gave them a day they'll most likely never get again. It was really cool as well to see how the kids were able to help us as well with our Spanish and how comfortable they felt around us."

Fuller explained that the group taught the gospel to the people they met by making salvation story bracelets with them. "We got to explain what each color meant," she said. "I think also just being there and showing that we felt called by God to come help this town in any way we could was helping to spread the gospel."

Both the trip leaders and the students who participated say that the bond they made with their teams is something that will never be broken or forgotten.

“I’ve never met a more diverse group of individuals with much in common on the inside. There was a bunch of us that would have never had a single conversation had we not met through this trip,” added Fuller. “Once we had all shared our stories with each other, we not only formed a strong connection, but we honestly felt more like family.”

Each trip was organized with extensive planning and each participant went through significant spiritual preparation, but the power of God that the groups witnessed was so awe-inspiring, no amount of planning could have adequately prepared them.

“It is exciting to see how God pulls together the perfect team for every mission trip and how He helps all of us to become a unified body working for a common goal,” said Dr. Eric Davis. “Although we always go on these trips hoping to be a blessing, we always come back having been blessed beyond our wildest imaginations. It is amazing to see how God works in these situations and how prayers are answered all along the way.”

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University was founded in 1905 and is home to nearly 5,000 students from 37 states and 21 foreign countries. Gardner-Webb seeks a higher ground in higher education – one that embraces faith and intellectual freedom, balances conviction and compassion, and inspires in students a love of learning, service, and leadership.