

The Vineyard's Costa Rica Mission Trip

Monday's Update

Hello friends and family of the Costa Rican missions team!

Today is Monday, and wow, today was quite the day. We started today off with a devotional/teaching time led by Delynn, our host for the week. He taught on the Love of God, and how it is a perfect love, and how we can be wounded by worldly love. It was a really thought-provoking topic, and I think it hit all of us pretty hard. We then split off for our personal quiet time, and many of us had readings in our devotionals, books, or Bibles that correlated perfectly with the Delynn's devotions. This seems to be a trend with our quiet time, and God is obviously teaching our group, as a whole, a common theme. We then had an amazing breakfast of gallo pinto, which was mentioned earlier, by our lovely cook Rosario.

We then headed out into the crazy Costa Rican traffic, for the 30 minute journey from Casa Vida (a home base of Pura Vida Missions) to Pablo's church, la Vina de Monte Dios. We started out the work day with finishing touches of our park beautification, which included setting up the slide, swingset, see-saw, gates, and painting the fence. We all started off hard at work, but as the morning drew on, everyone started getting really discouraged, bored, or tired. Matt and Lindsey tried to encourage us to work, but we all were pretty worn out from the past couple of days, and I'm pretty sure there was a lot of spiritual warfare going on over our hearts.

We stopped working to have lunch, where Pablo's wife, Jessica, and another lady of his church had made us hot ham and cheese sandwiches, as well as a juice made from a sour fruit called cas. The hospitality of Pablo and his family, as well as the family that hosts the church, continues to amaze me. They have opened up their home and all of their resources to host us during the workday, and that kind of unselfish love for people they barely know just floors me. Everything about Costa Rican culture just constantly shocks and surprises me, and I am completely in love with everyone here.

Our next phase of work today was splitting up into 2 groups, one that consisted of the people that would finish up the park, and the other that went around the community to do some servant evangelism. I was among those that got to participate in servant evangelism, which included passing out *refrescas*, or fruit-flavored sodas, and washing the windows of cars. Today was an



Getting some extra help from Pablo's daughters, Elizabeth and Judith.



Ryan and John showing off their teamwork.



Pablo prepping the

extra hot day, and the wandering around of the town, as well as completing the tedious tasks in the park, was very draining. We all toed the line of complaining and wallowing in our discomfort, but we still pushed through and completed everything we could in the park, and served lots of people throughout the community.

As the workday ended, we realized that we probably wouldn't see Pablo and his family again before we left. Saying *adios* was bittersweet, but seeing the heartfelt, genuine goodbyes was amazing as well. Our whole group has made real relationships with people from across the world, and it was really cool to see the gratitude and appreciation that both sides felt. Today, I actually got the privilege of spending lots of time with Pablo's daughters, Elizabeth (12) and Judith (5). They are both amazing, sweet, funny girls, and I now consider them my friends. They don't speak much English, so my Spanish and translation skills were tested to the max. Making real relationships with Ticos has tied my heart here to Costa Rica forever.

We ended the night with more amazing food from Casa Vida's cook, which featured tilapia, rice and beans, and a delicious fruit drink. Afterwards, we had a debriefing session to process through the day, and find the hand of God in our everyday dealings. Matt really challenged us tonight, because he knew that today had been the toughest mental day for us, and he made us think of what God wanted to teach us through our trials today. Some of us needed to work on patience, perseverance, or pride, but we all knew that something was on our hearts today from God. Most of us are now watching the movie *End of the Spear*, and gearing up for the New Years festivities. We are planning on leaving Casa Vida soon to get a mountain-height view of all the New Years fireworks that Costa Rica is known for.

Please be praying for our team and the rest of our time here in Costa Rica! Tomorrow we will be in La Cuenca, one of the poorest slums in Costa Rica, so we are all going to need an extra dose of emotional strength, Holy Spirit guidance, and extra compassion. Thank you so much to everyone who has been continually lifting us up in prayer! You have warded off many attacks, and allowed for great things to happen in the lives of many Costa Ricans, and helped our own spiritual growth. You are so appreciated!

With love,

Michael Clinton Schwartz

see-saw.



Mark Brown and Mike Steinke help with the slide placement.



Happy New Year!!!
