

An Eye Opening Experience

By Rachel Weinrick (St. Mark's, Grand Rapids)

The first day of VBS I met a little boy who was one of the smallest kids there. He was sitting at his desk with a dripping nose and looked around at everyone like they were terrifying. As I walked towards him, I began to really see him. Julio, that was his name, he was dirty, scared and alone. That's how I saw him. As I went to him, his eyes were wide with fear and I said "Hola!" he said nothing, only nodded. He followed me that whole day. Still the same scared boy. The next day I saw the same boy, scared and alone. But this day he was pushed over by some older kids. I began to scold them and as he turned to me he began to not be afraid. The last day I came in the class room but I didn't see him. Instead I saw a little boy who was dirty, yes, but excited, energetic, and talkative. As I left I turned to the little boy who tugged on my shirt, and who was no longer scared or alone. But instead happy and confident. He said to me "Adios!" and gave me the warmest hug I have ever received.

Dominican Republic

The "first day" ended up being the second day and so on and so forth. As we had a flight delay of eight hours and missed out next flight. We stayed the night in Atlanta, Georgia which ended up being great because we were able to see all of the history and architecture of that great city. When we finally arrived we went to our new home for the next week called "Hogar Obispo Isaac" in Santo Tomas, which was a home for the elderly. The next day we went to VBS at a church in a little town just outside of Santo Tomas. The children were hesitant at first as were we because of this new experience. After VBS everyday we were going to be going over to the church next door to help paint and pick up trash. That first day we walked around with some of the local Dominicans around the town. It was an eye opener that I believe everyone should experience. VBS changed so much the next day when all of the children were used to us. We all had a blast. We were excepted into what I like to call my new family. Everyday after VBS and fixing up the church, we went to the resort to cool off and eat. It was a very nice resort and the people there were very friendly. Then Saturday we helped with a lunch that the church does every week for the very poor and emaciated children in the community. We had about 73 children come and we were able to feed them all. What was amazing to me was that the elder children only accepted food when all of the younger children had food. Sunday we attended two church services. One at the church we painted and the other at the church across the street from the Hogar. Both churches had the same priest, her name was Rev. Margarita. She was the most amazing woman who taught me a wonderful quote "No one is poor if you have something to give". We were fortunate to be there for her last Sunday at each church as she was coming to America the following week. The Dominican Republic has taught me many things. I have learned more patience and that I can make a difference in others lives. In a way I am envious of them. They are happier than anyone whom I have ever met yet they are the poorest people I have ever met. This is the one thing which I am still learning from them now. I am learning to live a simpler life and a happier life because I have been blessed with so much and have been incredibly ludicrous about it all. God sent us to them so that we may make a difference, but so that they will make an even bigger difference within us. "We were born for this. Born for this day and Time."