

they received from all the aid workers. The DART members – while exhausted from the heat, workload, and physical challenges – never stopped giving and never stopped praying with (and for) the people of Mozambique. I felt the presence of Jesus everywhere. Team members could be seen throughout the EFH praying with villagers, and also praying in groups as babies were born and ailments were treated. They worked from early in the morning until late at night, and they responded in the middle of the night to emergencies. They prayed together daily and thanked God for the privilege of serving Him and others. The team members always found time for fellowship and singing. Each morning began with a group devotional before we left for the day's work.

The Christian faith of the Buzi people was as strong as ever, celebrating the

answers to their prayers that someone would come to assist in rebuilding their community. Organizations from all over the world worked together in a land that was strange to all of us. There were no language barriers, no political barriers, no race or religious barriers; all the barriers were replaced by the desire of one human being to help another who was desperately in need... all in the name of Jesus.

Over the 5 weeks that SP staffed the EFH, they treated over 5000 patients, transported over 90 metric tons of supplies, delivered 40 babies (including 17 C-sections), and dispensed over 10,000 prescriptions. During the transition, SP staff instructed local healthcare providers on how to use and maintain the medical equipment. At the end of SP's commitment in Buzi, the EFH and all the supplies were turned over to the

local Ministry of Health to continue providing services to the local population.

While my first SP deployment ended sooner than I planned, I saw the amazing work of Our Lord and Savior in Mozambique. Through our trust in the Lord, He used our hands and feet and He directed our paths in successfully accomplishing Bob Pierce's dream: to administer help to disaster victims in a far-off land and to spread the good news of Jesus. I encourage everyone to visit the Samaritan's Purse website and see the work being done for victims of natural disasters while sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You may also email me at [geneerb47@gmail.com](mailto:geneerb47@gmail.com) if you'd like more information about serving the Lord through Pharmacy and the Disaster Assistance Relief Team at Samaritan's Purse.



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## Heart for Honduras By Kelsey Merlo

### BACKGROUND

*Heart for Honduras* is a Christian organization established in 1998 by my father-in-law, who is originally from San Pedro Sula, Honduras and is now a pastor in Aurora, IL. He returned home after Hurricane Mitch devastated the country. That year marked the beginning of an incredible journey as a medical mission team was born. This mission team focuses on sustainability within the community and the trip leaders develop every plan with ethical decision-making in mind.

In 2018, *Heart for Honduras* began serving a rural mountain village in Buenos Aires, Honduras. This community is extremely remote, and because of that, there are no doctors willing to live or work so high up the mountain which makes the medical needs of this community quite evident. This past June, our team committed to continue working in Buenos Aires. Throughout



the year, *Heart for Honduras* raised funds that allowed our team to build two more classrooms, provide vacation bible school lessons for the week, distribute clothes and shoes, and provide not only medical and dental care, but now also gynecological and eye care as well.

I want to share two unique stories of lives changed that I witnessed on this trip to Honduras. One is my own personal story; the other is the experience of a teenage girl from my church in Utah.

### PERSONAL STORY

Being a pharmacy student, I spent the first two days working diligently in the “pharmacy” (a small table with a counting tray and a crooked tongue depressor as my spatula) preparing countless medications. Some of the local children peeked into the room and I asked if they wanted to help me. I had to explain in my broken Spanish exactly what I was doing, but before long I had a team of little

some of our new little friends, it was unbelievably heartbreaking to leave. Our team was rounded up and we all piled into the back of the pickup trucks. As I climbed into the truck bed on our last day in the village, I looked out to see the crowd of people we had spent the week with waving goodbye. I was so grateful to be able to connect with some of the same girls I had met from the previous year, and to see them one year older and bigger was amazingly special. As our truck began to pull away, my heart immediately cried out, “God please keep these little girls safe.” And in an instant, I almost audibly heard God say, “You don’t need to worry, I always protect my children.” It was a moment for me that will always remain engrained in my mind; it was truly a feeling of peace and connection with God that I will never forget.

### TRINITY’S STORY

If you’ve ever participated in a mission trip, you know that they are always individually life-changing; they remind you



“pharmacistas” counting pills and documenting on each medication bag. These kids had so much fun just counting pills and learning about medicines, and again I was reminded that sometimes it’s the smallest things that make the largest impact.

The moment that impacted me the most was as we began to drive away on our last day. After many days of playing games, working hard, and walking through the village with

of how much we take for granted in the US and what we should be thanking God for daily, but often overlook. God’s Word itself is an intertwined story of faithfulness. Over a striking amount of time, God was faithful in fulfilling every promise he ever made. His Son made a way for each of us by dying on the cross for every person’s sins. I was reminded that it doesn’t matter where you are, the power of the Holy Spirit is there because He lives in us. This was never more evident on this trip than in how I saw God

move in the life of a girl named Trinity, a young homeschooled Christian girl from my church in Utah. I had spent weeks trying to convince her parents that allowing Trinity to go on this mission trip to Honduras was a good idea. They finally agreed.

Trinity grew up extremely sheltered. She had never traveled by plane, and had essentially never left the state, let alone



been away from her family for more than two days. In a beautiful fashion that only God can design, this soft-spoken girl blossomed into a beautifully confident young woman. Watching her grow from fear and an anxiety attack on day one, to complete self-confidence and joy on day ten was overwhelming. Her faith grew immensely, her life experience was multiplied, and the relationships she built with the children were sincerely heartwarming. I can still hear Trinity's contagious laughter as she splashed through the water during her first trip to the ocean. The faithfulness I witnessed through watching her grow day by day was pure and even child-like. She felt safe and secure, stepped out of her comfort zone, and embraced the challenges that come with any mission trip. It was amazing to see her genuine self emerge as she interacted with the Honduran children in the village and it truly ignited a new-found confidence in her. Many of the adults on this trip who didn't know Trinity approached me saying things like, "This girl's life is going to be completely different when she gets home," or jokingly, "Her parents don't know what just happened to their daughter!"

I reached out to Trinity a few weeks after returning home. I asked how she felt this mission trip had grown her faith and changed her life, and this was her answer: **"I have this new-found sense of adventure. I used to be just so content with pointless things I would waste my life on, but now that I've seen what God can bring me to, and what indescribable things He can put in my life and before my eyes, I want more. Not in the sense of greed, but that I now see how much more there is to life. Serving others has brought peace to my heart."**

Life changing experiences can come in limitless ways, and it is through faith in Christ and an eternal perspective that we can attempt to grasp the fullness of how God moves in our life. As a follower of Christ, reflecting on any mission trip typically brings great memories of playing with children and incredible new experiences in a foreign country with a team of fellow believers; but this was truly the first time I considered not only what *I* got out of this trip, but also actively chose to observe the life-change in someone else.

I can honestly say that God gave me fresh eyes to see things in a new way by quietly observing each of Trinity's new experiences and learning from them.

## CONCLUSION

As a pharmacy student beginning my third year of school, I feel more prepared than ever to serve my patients with a new sense of respect, empathy, and genuine patience. Luke 12:48b (ESV) says "Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more." This truth certainly applies to the pharmacy profession where the health and wellness of others is entrusted. The personal experience I had in Honduras, and the blessing of seeing Trinity's experience, will undoubtedly motivate me to serve my patients with a new heart and refreshed eyes... and to actively meet not only the physical needs, but the emotional and spiritual needs as well.



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*played college soccer and earned her BA at Trinity International University. She and her husband now live in Ogden, Utah where they love to go skiing and taking their boxer puppy hiking and camping. As a pharmacy student, she actively works to represent Christ in all aspects of her life, especially pharmacy, through hard work, empathy, prayer, and building relationships. Kelsey's favorite Bible verse is Colossians 3:23 (ESV): "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men."*