

Thursday, July 2 (PM)

Dear all,

We have had a wonderful, very full week in Costa Rica so far. Highlights include:

- Landing in a **thunderstorm** and driving over the mountain in a downpour,
- Setting up **clinic** in the newly painted fellowship hall at San Lucas,
- An inspiring Eucharist in the beautiful, **outdoor chapel** at EARTH University,
  
- A delicious **barbecue** with excellent singing and **dancing** by students from various Latin American countries,
- The joy of renewing **friendships** with the medical team, interpreters, and church members, not to mention the children, some of whom we have gotten to know very well,
- Passing out lots of "**vitaminas**" and worm medication to families whose children are basically healthy, but want to take full advantage of the services that we offer,
  
- Giving **nutritional advice** to lots of parents who are concerned about their children's appetites,
- A fun field trip to the **grocery store** in Guapiles to sample the food and learn about our patients' diets,
- **Tasty lunches**, with lots of fresh fruits and some local treats, thanks to Mike,
  
- A walk along the railroad bed and over a **railroad trestle** at lunch one day and learning a new jump rope game from the girls the next day,
- Long walks in the hot, humid climate, with many **exotic birds** in the trees,
- Watching the industrious, very creative students at EARTH construct very ingenious **bamboo booths** all over campus in preparation for a big exposition to be held here this coming weekend, xxxxx
  
- Getting to see the **banana train** in action, and seeing first hand how the bananas are harvested, cleaned, and packed for shipping,
- Trekking into the thick bamboo underbrush with our intrepid explorer Teresa in search of **green parrots** and yellow tailed oropendulas,
- Discovering the lecheria (dairy), with small herds of cows and pigs nearby,
  
- Father Pedro's **hearty singing** as he led us in **worship** in the beautifully painted sanctuary at San Lucas tonight,
- A warm and **intimate dinner** with Father Pedro and his family and several church members, with a delicious fried rice and tender, stewed chicken, with fruit yogurt for desert,
- Singing "**Feliz Cumpleaños**" to Victor on his fortieth birthday, and
  
- Eating **homemade frozen yogurt** and fruit popsicles from the snack bar at EARTH.

Tomorrow we will visit **Limón** on the Caribbean coast to look at a possible location for another medical clinic. Then on Saturday, we will join Bishop Monterroso on a visit to several waterfalls about an hour from **San José**. I'm looking forward to staying in the peaceful hotel there with the open air breakfast area on the roof, with a great view of San José.

Please continue to keep us in your prayers. **The Lord is truly at work in and among His people here in Costa Rica.** There is much that we can do to share with them some of our financial and logistical resources, just as they have generously shared their abundant natural and spiritual resources with us.

**Dios te bendige!** (*God bless you.*)

Elizabeth

P.S. I have added lots of pictures to my album, which you can see at the following link:  
<http://picasaweb.google.es/eallen510/CostaRicaMissionTripJune2009?feat=directlink>

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**Girls at San Lucas**



**Father Pedro with 4-string guitar**

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Wednesday, July 01, 2009

Dear friends,

We have been very graciously welcomed back to Costa Rica by friends that we met last year. It seems that the second time is even more special than the first. Even though pastors two different churches and teaches at a local college, **Father Pedro** shows up every morning to help us – hanging curtains to create exam rooms in the fellowship hall, starting our day with a prayer, or just encouraging us with a smile. His wife **Norma** welcomes the patients to our medical clinic and works behind the scenes to do the little things that make a big difference. Their daughter **Maria José** looks like a little princess. Her friendly manner and lovely smile add sparkle to every day. Her brother **Daniel**, who shyly hid behind his mother's leg last year (and who initially was anxious about being examined by me in clinic yesterday) enjoyed having his face painted by Hugo today.

Three veteran interpreters travel an hour and a half by local bus from the port city of Limón every day to translate for us. They are all bilingual and are members of other churches in the diocese in which there are many more people who speak English. **Hilda** is a soft-spoken woman about my age who is a natural teacher. She is very patient with my halting Spanish and thorough manner with patients. Hilda is a great resource when I need a better understanding of local customs, nutritional habits, etc. **Elsa** is the sort of trustworthy person who inspires confidence in other people. She helps greet the patients and finds out why they are there. **Mercia** assisted with Vacation Bible School last week. She is quite fluent and can translate almost anything that we say. I kept them all entertained at lunch yesterday as I alternately squealed and chased a **lizard** around the clinic, trying to take its picture! We are very grateful for their gift of their skills, time, and encouragement.

Our work in the medical clinic would not be possible without **Dr. Egle Frugone** and her very capable medical team. Dr. Frugone is a wise, down-to-earth person who understands her patients and cares for them very well. Perhaps the hardest-working people in the clinic are **Sonya Sanchez**, the dentist, and her assistant **Elena**. There is always a long line for their services! Most of the time, they work in San José. However, they frequently travel within Costa Rica to provide medical and dental care for people who otherwise could not afford it. Our friend **Hugo** often accompanies them so that he can keep the children entertained by his work as a clown. Hugo, who was essentially an orphan as a child, has a special gift for making children feel special. His face-painting is masterful and can a self-conscious child feel attractive. Like the Pied Piper, Hugo is usually surrounded by a group of children, all intent on the balloon creatures he is making or the face he is painting. With a smaller team this year, we have been able to get to know the medical team much better, especially at lunch and over leisurely meals at the EARTH University cafeteria.

The most unexpected, joyful reunion so far was with **Victor**, a friend from EARTH University.

Last year, when I was out for a walk one morning, I stopped to sit for a while at the top of a hill, enjoy the scenery, and write in my journal. I watched dozens of students walk down the hill before 6AM on their way to the fields or to their classes. One person stopped, walked up the hill, and graciously introduced himself. His name was Victor and I quickly learned that he had two nieces who were attending the Vacation Bible School that we were hosting. I don't think I will ever forget his warm smile. It can feel a little lonely to be in a strange place among people

whose language you do not speak well. Somehow, Victor made me feel welcome, safe, and at home at the university in which he works.

Back to this year: As Teresa and I were walking toward the chapel, trying to get a better view of the mountain in the distance, I told her about meeting Victor last year. Just a few seconds later, when we reached the bottom of the hill, I was amazed to see Victor walking right toward us. Our faces lit up at the same time as we recognized each other. What heavenly timing! It turns out that Victor takes care of the chapel and the gym. He took us to the **beautiful chapel**, where we had had Eucharist the night before, and gave us our own personal tour. He must be a person of faith because he obviously cares deeply about that chapel. Today, I saw Victor's niece **Selena** again at San Lucas. She is vibrant, engaging girl, whom I never would have gotten to know if I had not met Victor last year. It is a small world!

Maybe next year, more of you will be able to come with us to Costa Rica. It is an incredibly beautiful place with warm, welcoming people. **May our gracious God continue to knit us together as we serve Him side by side.**

With a heart full of joy,

Elizabeth

P.S. To see some of my pictures, click on the following link:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/eallen510/CostaRicaMissionTripJune2009?feat=directlink>

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Reunion with Victor, a good friend





Elsa, Hilda & Mercia in clinic

Father Pedro, Maria Jose & Bishop Monterroso

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Youth in front of newly painted church - San Lucas. June 2009

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Following is a link to a prayer of thanksgiving we used during devotion time on our last night of mission work in Guacimo, Costa Rica. On Saturday morning, we travel to Puerto Viejo for a weekend of rest and relaxation.

## [A Litany of Thanksgiving At The End of A Week of Mission Work](#)

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Dear all,

The youth have finished their work and are off to the **beach**. They had a really sunny week this past week, with very little rain. That meant that they got the painting done faster than expected. Now they are enjoying some R&R in Puerto Viejo. It sounds sunny and beautiful!

Teresa Kennedy and I arrived in **San José** about mid-day. We were met by Mike and Penni Bradshaw and Chip Morgan, all of whom have been here for at least a week. Mike and Chip were working with the youth, while Penni attended a language school.

The first part of my flight down was really entertaining. I was very hungry (many hours after breakfast) so, when the lady in the seat behind me started talking about her restaurant and describing its delicious food, I couldn't help but ask her about it. That led to one of the funniest, most poignant stories I have ever heard. She was a master **storyteller** and kept several of us spellbound with the interesting saga of how she ended up in Costa Rica.

The end of the flight was harder. Last year, when I sent my first e-mail home, I wrote that we had arrived uneventfully. Jane McKim, who does not like to fly nearly as much as her pilot husband Tom, reminded me that we had hit some turbulence on the way. This year, even though I am usually very relaxed and comfortable flying, an unexpected, quick deceleration and descent of our aircraft as we neared San José unsettled me a little. Then the pilot told us all to take our seats. By the fifth time he said this, each time with some urgency in his voice, I was not surprised to hear him say that we were having to skirt around some "**weather**" just north of San Jose. There must have been a big storm. It got very dark and we felt some turbulence. I did a lot of praying, as did some of the other passengers. I have rarely ever been so glad to feel solid ground under the wheels!

Mike Bradshaw did a great job of driving us through the **pouring rain** up and over the mountains, through Parque Nacional Braulio Carrillo. There was lots of (close) lightning and thunder. It had stopped raining by the time we arrived, so we were able to get our suitcases unloaded easily. Just one minute later, it started to rain again. However, at EARTH University, the covered walkways kept us dry. It is so nice to be back!

Tonight we had dinner with the medical team from last year. It was great to see them again. The food was excellent. We had a delicious potato dish, fresh bananas, rice and tastier-than-usual beans, lots of strawberry juice, and custard for dessert. **Yum!**

Tomorrow, the adults will start the **medical clinic** at San Lucas (in the fellowship hall that the youth painted orange last week). The youth will drive back to EARTH from Puerto Viejo. We will have a service in the chapel with Bishop Hector Monterroso at 5:30 PM. Then we will all go out to the pavilion for a **fiesta**. If it is like last year, they will serve us a delicious barbecue dinner and then students will skillfully demonstrate dances from their home countries. We will get home fairly late, so I probably will not write much. Then the youth will leave on Tuesday.

Thanks so much for your prayers and support.

Blessings,

Elizabeth Allen (6-28-09)

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**Facebook page of Steve Smith -**

<http://www.facebook.com/inbox/readmessage.php?t=1157659017134>

In Facebook, click on **Costa Rica 2009** for all the pictures!

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Hello St. Paul's!

Today was our first official day here in Costa Rica. We started off by going to see the playground in the parish that we had built last year. We were reintroduced to Father Pedro and his wife Norma. This week we are working at St. Luke's painting the parish hall. It's the color of a ripe sun-kissed orange, so when we walk in it will brighten everyone's day, just like ripe sun-kissed oranges do. While others were painting, our job today was to hunt down our prey and prepare it for lunch (aka ride 30 minutes to the grocery store). It beats the rice and beans we have for breakfast and dinner, so don't plan on making either of those things for dinner soon. The fruit is absolutely amazing, especially after you clean in bleach (the Bradshaw boy scout method). To burn off lunch, we went to the pool and played intense handball. Tonight was the first night of VBS and we were all excited to see the kids. After returning to earth we played killer and had devotions. Now we are off to face the trillions of beetles, lizards, and armadillos that await us. Hope everything is well in Winston!

-Woof

The Dog Pound

(Mary Beth, Sally, Ben, Helen, Doug, Emily)

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Hello St Paul's!

Another early morning. We were worn out after chasing down (and nearly being attacked by) an armadillo. Those things can jump really high. We started the day off with rice and beans, and then set off for the church again. We finished painting the room, and then had the world famous Mike Bradshaw Tuna Salad. After slaving away in the kitchen, we returned to Earth. A few of us, who shall remain unnamed, got into a "harmless" water balloon fight that almost got them into a load of trouble. After apologizing to the staff and mopping up the mess, they felt satisfied that had made penance. Tonight was the second night of VBS, where we enjoyed more water balloon fun. The theme at VBS was "participar es amar" which translates as "to participate is to love." We came back to Earth again for, surprise surprise, rice and beans (this time with steak). We played a game of human pinball, and then Chip led us in the devotion about the meaning of "the kingdom of God." We talked about the parable of the sower and what it meant to each of us personally. Now we're off to play some four square and relax in bed.

-Team Equipo

(Matt, Miller, Artie, Caroline, Rebecca)