

Daily Report
July 5, 2010

People are not defined by words, but by actions. And here in the D.R. you can see those characteristics with our team and in 99.99% of the locals. If you plan on swimming, working, eating, or singing, prepare to do it en masse with the friendly locals and fellow gringos. From people you've never met before that practically spoon feed you after bringing you inside to rest and chat, to random men that pick up a shovel to help mix concrete for a sidewalk (while in clean clothing) and walk on to their jobs or homes, to children that will take you anywhere in the city for some peanuts and some water, the Dominican Republic peoples set the standard for how we should all be in our actions.

I have yet to feel culture shock, for I feel at home here. If it weren't for sunburn, this place would make for a nice location for a home. The VBS program is quite successful, and if it will help us reach the adults, then it will be a positive catalyst to this city's problems. After a man nearly hacked off a woman's face with a knife in front of the VBS entrance, the children continued to play and giggle as they watched the situation because they have grown up with it. A Dominican girl gave me a hug and wore a ginormous smile when I told her to get inside the building. After that I played with a young toddler that I kept in my arms and on my shoulders the whole time I was interacting with him. I hope he has a decent life at the least.

I'm looking forward to coming home and playing my new game STALKER: Call of Pripjat. The trip will be finished soon and I'm looking forward to having my "arm-room" back. I definitely will not hesitate to come back. CHRIS REAGAN WAS HERE!!!

Today is Monday and I'm just now realizing that I only have a few more days in this beautiful country. Before coming on this trip, I was scared. I had never before been on a mission trip, left the country, or even been on a plane. Coming here, I had no idea what to expect. I thought that I would hate it here and want to go back to America as soon as possible. Now that I've spent time here, I find myself not wanting to go back. I miss my family and my friends of course, but I don't miss American society. In the Dominican, the people on the street act as if they've known you their entire lives. Even though many people here don't have much, they're always willing to smile, wave, and tell you hello. One thing that I will never forget about the Dominican is the children here. They've made such an impact on my life and they've shown me Jesus more than anything else has. I sat next to a little girl in the children's service on Sunday morning and she brought out this big bible coloring book. She went through every single page telling me every character that was in the pictures. It made me realize that even though these children have almost nothing, they trust fully in God and love learning more about him. It also touched me to see how willing these children are to love you. All they want to do is come up and give you a huge hug, sit in your lap, and talk to you. Usually after youth retreats I'm afraid that when we all go home, things will go back to being how they were before we left. I'm not afraid of that this time because I know for sure that I've changed, and I believe that this trip has changed every single one of us in some way. It's impossible to experience something so incredible and life changing such as this and then go back and act like nothing happened. We're all here for a reason this week, even if we don't figure that reason out until later. My prayer this week is that we all keep our focus on God when we go home, and that none

of us will forget what God has done in all of our lives during our time in the Dominican Republic. P.S. Abbie, I haven't been able to say "BABBY" all week and it's starting to get to me. —Emily Golden <3

Today, Monday, I awoke and crawled awkwardly out of the mosquito net and down off of the top bunk. I stumbled to the bathroom and began the day - another beautiful day in an incredibly beautiful country. Today was community day - we split into groups and visited local families of Rio San Juan, spending several hours in their homes. We went to Jasmine's house. The kids took us for a walk around the barrio, and we played with bubbles with the large group of kids that had gathered. Ranger, a local 13 year old boy whose constant joy and incredible spirit I'm sure y'all have already heard about, accompanied us, along with Ronald and Rosi, an incredibly kind couple from Costa Rica that does a lot of good work for Manna DR. Jamin and her family served us a delicious lunch of chicken, rice, beans, and salad. I was really struck by the joy and sense of community found in that area of Rio San Juan. Afterwards, we returned to the compound and put on another VBS for the children. Matt Dolberry, Rachel Perry, Josh McAlpin, and I put on two puppet shows using puppets that we made and a script that Rachel wrote in English and had translated into Spanish for us to read. It was a lot of fun. The Dominican kids were very well-behaved and attentive throughout. After VBS, many of the girls colored, and many of the boys played soccer. As I write this, most of the kids have walked back to their homes, and a large portion of our group is playing what sounds like an intense and controversial card game called "Mafia". God is alive and active here in the DR. Please continue to keep our team, the Manna D.R. group, and the communities that they work with in your prayers. I must leave the laptop now however because it appears that I have sweated all of my bug spray off and I am starting to get eaten alive.

Blessings, Josh Commers

I want to start off saying that I'm so glad I have gotten to come to the DR and it seriously has been a blast. Everything has not been what I expected and I love not knowing what is going to happen next. The people here are so sweet and I can definitely see God working in them.

So first we went to eat at people's houses. My group ate at a really sweet lady's house who had about 10 kids, or at least that's how many kids were there. They are SO sweet and playful. They also love my camera and took about 20 pictures. One of the kids brought me to somebody's house with about 6 women that knew no English. Yeah that was a little difficult. Our meal was amazing! And to go with it, we had cough syrup coke. We ate while everyone else cleaned the kitchen. They wouldn't let us help though. After that we painted nails and the kids did me and Shelly's hair while the others talked to the women that cooked. Then one girl kept saying something and pulling me down the street so everyone kind of followed. When we got to the end of the street, I was looking at the ocean. It was sooo pretty! We hung out there and of course got pictures. After that, we went back and chilled. About 20 minutes later, it was time to go back to the manna place. From the manna place, we went back to camp to do VBS. The kids were adorable, though some of them didn't like instructions. While the bigger people played soccer, I kicked the ball with about 5 little kids. My favorite one was this little chubby kid that tried his best to hit it like volleyball but could never do it. Then we ate hotdogs and chili and hung out. So it's been a great trip and I can't wait to see what happens. Keep us in your prayers. Robin Wood

God truly is amazing! The sunrise this morning was beautiful in the DR and really set the tone for what was going to be an awesome day. The day began with another outstanding breakfast prepared by Carmen and her two daughters I am so grateful for the work they do fixing all of our meals. We then loaded up on the Diahatsu and headed down the bumpy road to Rio San Juan for community day. Community day is a day where our group is split up and each smaller group are given a family to spend the morning with and share lunch. My group was Olivia, Phil, Nathan, Macy, Chad, Nikki, and Glenn and we were graciously welcomed in by Miriam and her family. The morning was fantastic and lunch time couldn't come soon enough. Miriam and her family cooked us a feast with fried plantains, beans, rice, chicken, Dominican salad, candied fruits, and fresh fruit. The meal was wrapped up with everyone sitting around the table enjoying a very hot cup of coffee. After we said our goodbyes we traveled to the Manna compound for our second vbs, this time with the kids of Bobita.

The vbs went better than the first and I'm so proud of our team and all of the preparation and hard work they have been doing thus far. When vbs was finished a gauntlet was thrown down with the interns and the Dominican kids playing a heated game of futbol against the American gringos. Our team of five (myself, Matt, Nathan, Kidron, and first half Jake/second Josh C.) stepped on the pitch being stared down by the twenty Dominicans on the other half. The battle raged, but in the end the Americans prevailed, leaving the field with the respect they sought (2014 world cup...here we come).

The whole trip has been a humbling experience showing me that I take so many things for granted. The Dominicans are full with an excitement for life. They're always greeting you with a smile and offering a place to sit and stay a while. After seeing where they come from and the way they act, I have no right to complain. We loaded up on a plane 5 days ago with smiles and plans to bring Jesus to the people of Rio San Juan and the Dominican Republic. However we are going to leave here in 3 days with the same smiles on our face, but the plan has changed. Instead of us showing this country Jesus they have taught us all how to live with joy and a fire for life and the blessings God has given us. Continue to pray for us, because they are being answered every day! I can't wait to see you all and share all God has done on this trip. I love you! -Zack Dolberry