

Monday, June 21:

### **Kelly Johnson**

How do I even begin to put into words how I feel about my experience so far? I am not, unfortunately, eloquent enough to do it justice.

First, I want to thank my daughter for being so adamant last year that we would be coming on this year's trip. I have felt a call to go on an international mission trip for several years, but there are always plenty of available excuses to keep me from going. Claire's insistence last year made me determined to come, because I felt that if she had a heart for missions, it was my duty as a parent to encourage it.

The poverty here is overwhelming-truly unimaginable and difficult to describe. It's amazing how just a couple of days here can change your perspective. Maybe that's why it's so easy to find excuses to not come on a trip like this. Maybe it's because Satan doesn't want our perspective changed. He wants us in our nice, comfortable world where we are wrapped up in ourselves and our busy lives. He wants us to stay unaware of the work out there that needs to be done in the name of Jesus.

Although the people here live in and endure conditions we cannot fathom in our country, they are not feeling sorry for themselves. Driving through town, you see people working and busy. In worship, the passion with which they sang songs and the tireless way they fed hungry people after services was nothing short of inspirational.

During the clinic on Sunday afternoon, it was amazing to see the number of people who waited patiently to see a doctor or a nurse to be treated for things that we simply just run to Wal-Mart for.....aches, pains, and infections that they just have to put up with, because either they have no access to healthcare or no money to pay for it. The highlight of my clinic day was when a pregnant mommy brought her little girl to me for treatment. After we discussed her daughter, she showed her pregnant belly to me and asked me about some pain she had experienced. I placed my hands on her beautiful, swollen, pregnant belly and began to feel for the baby. It was only seconds before I was rewarded with movement! We talked some and after I reassured her that what she had felt was normal, she asked if I would pray for her. So, I put my hands back on her tummy and prayed to God on behalf of her and her unborn baby. That was such a blessing for me. To be this far away from the job that I love and still get to experience the joy that comes from working with expectant mommies...God is good!!

Today was spent at the Manna International compound doing construction type work and then having a VBS for children. We met the people who live there and several college interns who have given up their summer to help the Haitian people. Again, I am amazed by those who have devoted their entire lives to serving people in foreign lands when it took me years to decide to give up just a week out of my own life.

I spent the first part of the day scraping paint off of a concrete building, which I have to say I actually enjoyed. The fellowship with the other team members was fantastic and fun! After lunch, there was time to relax and play games with the Haitian children. It was especially gratifying to see what joy a package of bubbles brought them! They were all smiles and giggles as they were blowing those bubbles! I was also so proud to see Claire interacting with the children and playing soccer with them. Even though we speak different languages, it is incredibly easy to find a connection.

As we drive through town, conduct a clinic or VBS, or simply just interact with the Haitian people, this thought continues to run through my mind: God loves these people! Jesus died for these people! Sometimes, I think that in our comfortable sheltered world we lose sight of the fact that we are just one small part of the world God created.

Just spending two days here has already made me ashamed and embarrassed of the things I complain about. Sometimes, I think the reason we complain about the things we do (our homes, cars, bills, money, busy schedules, etc....) is that we really don't have anything to complain about! We think of ourselves as so blessed in America and in many ways we are. But, I can't help but wonder if all of our affluence, conveniences and luxuries actually cause us to be more self-reliant and self-centered instead of God-reliant and God-centered?

Finally, I feel as though I must implore everyone to go on a mission trip like this. We are never more like Jesus than when we are serving others. There is nothing like leaving everything that makes you comfortable, putting yourself out there and watching God work! It has been and I am sure will continue to be a blessing for me to be here. Connecting with Christians in other parts of the world is truly a very special thing—because for all the things that make us different, the ONE thing that makes us the same is the only thing that matters! We ALL need Jesus!! And through Him, we are family!! So.....just do it! Quit thinking about it, quit making excuses. God will give you all the strength, courage, help, money, peace, etc. that you need if you just make the decision to go! After all, if a self-proclaimed princess like me can do this and love it and feel humbled and blessed by it, then ANYONE can!!

### **Claire Johnson**

Today was very fun! This trip has been good so far, but I think today was the best day. I love kids and getting to be with them all day was just great. I love to play with kids and I got to play with them and take pictures of them. It was fun playing soccer with them and fun to watch them play. I got to help teach the children the story of the Good Samaritan and then teach them how to treat a wound or a burn. Then we helped them bandage each other! I took pictures of that and of them playing soccer. I liked playing soccer with them because they love the sport and so do I! They really got into the game and seemed to have fun. The truck ride home was fun and I loved the way the children ran after us. I saw Jesus in those children today. Today was very tiring and fun. I can't wait until tomorrow!

### **Todd Zumbun**

Our journey to the Manna compound: As our journey starts riding in the back of our luxurious truck (jumbo tap-tap, whatever) we begin the trek through the city. As everyone on the team snuggles together to enjoy the sights, it is evident that we all see different things. I tend to really look at the construction, buildings, stores and the way people earn a living. I think the teens see more through kids' eyes what it must be like to live, eat, bathe, etc. in Haiti.

As we made our way to the Manna International compound, we were greeted by several college students who have given up their summer in the states to serve those in need in Haiti. After all the introductions, it was time to get to work. We started mixing concrete and bucketing it to where it was poured in forms to support new walls. Many

others were scraping paint. After some hot and heavy work, it was time for all of us to eat. Fellowshiping at lunch is always good. You learn a lot about people and what they have seen and how they feel that day,

It is time for VBS and boy, are those kids excited! VBS is where Jesus shines in those cheery, smiling faces. From Bobby and Morgan leading singing to Annette reading stories and Jan keeping everyone laughing, it was starting out great! Everyone knew their part and the kids were thankful.

I don't know how to explain the feeling you get when helping these children, other than being the parent on Christmas morning that got your child exactly the right gift. The smiles, giggles, hugs and laughter are contagious. How blessed we are and how thankful I am to be able to spend this time with my son.

### **Tanner Zumbrun**

I began the 2<sup>nd</sup> full day in Haiti by waking up cold at 6 am. I didn't think in Haiti I would be cold. Though it was chilly, it sure beat the opposite and for that I am thankful! So, back to the story... We began our trip with a bumpy hour drive on a small, dirt road to the compound. When we arrived we pulled in through a large wooden gate and found a couple of buildings with some of them still being built. As we started to unload the truck we were greeted by the volunteer workers at the compound. Then, truly began our day working by mixing and pouring concrete while other workers scraped a multi-purpose building. After most of the work was done, I played soccer with some of the kids who were at the compound. If you ever are going to play soccer with Haitian kids, there are some things you need to know. 1. They are good. 2. They are fast. 3. They take soccer very seriously. After the soccer game, we ate lunch and then had time for a break, which was used to play soccer. Then at 3 o'clock was VBS in which I helped with games. Today was tons of fun, but the highlight of the day was the kids. Especially my buddies, Ozz and Aaron.