



Participants share stories of mission

El Hogar: A new view

BY MOLLY BABB

I recently returned from a life-changing mission trip to El Hogar in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. There were several things that struck me while I was down there. First was the amount of love that the kids of El Hogar had and were willing to share with us. They have been through much more than you and I could ever imagine, yet they still have a smile on their face and answer “good” when you ask how they are. Many of the kids were abused by their parents or their parents abandoned them and left them to fend for themselves. They spent a good part of their life on the streets, looking after their siblings and digging through dumpsters to find even a little food.

On the bus coming back from the park, all the kids were tired (for once!) and fell asleep. Looking around, I saw two brothers sleeping next to each other. The little one had his head on the older boy’s shoulder, and the older boy in return had his arm around his brother with his head resting against the other. It warmed my heart to see two kids look out for each other like that.

The next thing that struck me was at just how poor these people are. Sure, we’ve all seen homeless people before, or imagined what being poor in a third-world country is really like, but that doesn’t do justice to the situation. All week, we had been told about the poverty there and where the kids came from. I had read the bios of the kids, and their home life was a picture in my mind. Yes, I was told that some of them had no food in their house, but I couldn’t imagine what that really meant. I’ve always had food on the table, and snacks when I was “hungry.” But my “hungry” is nothing compared to the hungriness of some of these people.

On Friday, we went on a home visit. Walking to the house from



Molly Babb sits with students at El Hogar.

when we looked around, I was overcome at what I saw. There was absolutely no food. And I don’t mean that there weren’t any extra boxes of dry food, or any fresh food, or cans of beans. There was no food. They obviously hadn’t had anything for breakfast, and it hurt me to think of what they would do when it was time for lunch or dinner. That shook me to the core.

Seeing people, even little kids, whose clothes are torn and dirty, and they are all skin and bones, digging through dumpsters, broke my heart. At home, all I had to do was open the pantry and grab a snack, but they scrounged for even a bite of sandwich that someone might have thrown out.

The last thing that struck me was when you smiled at a kid. All you had to do was look them in the eyes and smile. No “hola” or anything, and the response was amazing. They smiled and their whole face lit up. It melted my heart every

the street, I couldn’t help but notice my surroundings. There was a lot of trash, the smell wasn’t something that we would live with, and the houses were extremely close together and small. We met the family and were invited into their home. Only two or three of us could fit into the house at one time. That’s how small it was—the size of one of our bathrooms was the size of their house. This family had six people living there and sharing two twin beds. Talk about cramped living. But

The best way to help El Hogar is by sponsoring a child. For less than \$30 a week, you can change a child’s life by providing, food, shelter, education, and stability in a nurturing, Christian environment. Partial sponsorships and unrestricted donations are also welcome! Find more information at www.elhogar.org. Redeemer, St. Timothy, and Christ Church Cathedral have mission trips scheduled for this fall as well as in the winter and summer of 2013. Contact Carolyn Martin at kdmartin@pol.net for more information about service teams or the following fundraising opportunities:

Kroger will automatically donate 4% of what you spend if you register your rewards card through Calvary Church or Redeemer. El Hogar is an official charity of all Flying Pig Marathon weekend events. If you register for Team El Hogar, you will get a discounted registration price and El Hogar will get a donation. Register at www.flyingpigmarathon.com and use the code EHMFP in the charity code area.

time because I knew that they really meant the smile and that they counted you as someone who can be trusted. Material-wise they don’t have what we do, but in their heart, they have more—they have Jesus, and if we’re honest, what more could be needed? And they are genuinely happy—there is hope, and they know it.

All I can say is that the entire trip was better than amazing, and I can’t fully describe it. I know I learned a lot. Who would’ve guessed that it would take a bunch of kids in Honduras to teach me to be grateful, to be understanding, to appreciate the little things, to be happy with what I have, to grow more in my walk with God, and to teach me to love? I realized on the plane coming home that I was called to go back there and serve, to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Molly Babb attends Church of the Redeemer, Hyde Park, and is a sophomore in high school.

Russia: Everlasting light

BY KIMBERLY TABER



After 19 grueling hours of travel, 16 youth, including me, and six chaperones touched down in St. Petersburg, Russia to begin our two-week mission trip organized by the Miami Valley Episcopal Russian Network. Not knowing what to expect, we plunged headfirst into the unknown with open minds and love – and an awesome translator named Igor.

We started out touring St. Petersburg and learning about the spectacular history and accomplishments of the Russian people. Like any good tourists we had our cameras at the ready as we got up close and personal with St. Isaac’s Cathedral, the Cathedral of Peter and Paul, the Summer Palace, the Hermitage Museum, The Church of our Savior on Spilled Blood and so, so much more! While soaking in the vibrant pulse of the city and the breathtaking architecture, we developed a love and respect for the country that we were so blessed to be exploring.

Our true work began in the small town of Sablino. Here we stayed at the youth center run by Father Nikolai, the priest of the local Russian Orthodox Church. We were graciously welcomed with huge smiles and open arms. The first day, we all came together in a circle to introduce ourselves to one another. Each holding a candle, Americans and Russians alike took turns introducing themselves. When one person was done talking, they lit the person’s candle next to them, until everyone had a flame of friendship. Throughout the next eight days, our time was a whirlwind of activity, hard work, smiles and laughter. Our favorite time was spent interacting and playing with the children. Although none of us spoke Russian and



Stephanie Sexton, Kimberly Taber, Abby Bray and Nina McLarnan pose with some of the Russian youth.

many of the children did not know English, we quickly realized that language was a trivial matter when there was so much ping pong, volleyball, and running around to be done.

At the same time, our service projects were immensely rewarding. Different groups worked different projects around the youth center and in the community. While some of us shoveled massive amounts of gravel, others painted the youth center

and the fence, while still others spent a day cleaning out a pond. For two days, a group of us went to a burned-down home and helped the owner clear away the charred remains of his past life.

As an extra bonus, our trip aligned with the annual White Nights. Instead of night enveloping us in darkness, the sun never fully set – it never extinguished its light over Sablino. In many ways this represents the work, memories, and friendships that we developed over our two weeks in Russia. It was our hope, prayer, and mission to leave behind something that would never end in the hearts of our new Russian friends. The memories and friendships that we made will be unforgettable. Even as the paint on the youth center fades and the children grow up, we believe that the light sparked in our own hearts, and the light we sparked in the community of Sablino will never fully set, but continue to warm our hearts and never go out.

Kimberly Taber attends St. James, Westwood, and is a senior in high school.