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Missions Trip Opens Evangelism Opportunities in Côte d'Ivoire

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – When Dr. Thomas Mach, vice president for academics, originally pitched the idea of a missions trip to the Ivory Coast to serve alongside his missionary brother, Bob, he didn't expect much interest. Instead, more than 60 students attended the introductory meeting and Dr. Angelia Mickle, dean of the school of nursing also expressed an interest in going. A medical missions trip was planned for spring break and on March 3, Mach and Mickle, accompanied by 13 students, left for Côte d'Ivoire.

The goal of the trip was to create opportunities for church plants in two area villages, serving alongside Bob Mach and his church, Bingerville Church. During the trip, 167 people made professions of faith and opened the way for further evangelism and discipleship.

Of the 13 students chosen, three were nursing students, four were pharmacy students and two were allied health students — comprising the medical side of the trip. Alongside them, a linguistics major, a business major and a molecular and cellular biology major came to serve. Mach's daughter, Kiley, a freshman studio art student, became number 13, accompanying her dad to paint a mural behind the church baptismal for her uncle.

The night before the team left for the Ivory Coast, Bobby Hile, pastor at Southgate Baptist Church in Springfield, spoke with team members about the reason for their trip. He emphasized how the trip had a ministry focus and exhorted the team to go for something bigger than themselves. Everything else was secondary to the primary purpose of the team.

"You just have to give up your hesitations about going — whether that's the cost or fear of sickness — and be willing to see what God can do," Mach said. "I realized my hesitations were not important enough to stop the bigger purpose."

Once in Côte d'Ivoire, while Mickle oversaw the students at the clinic, Mach and his daughter traveled to the church to teach and paint. At the clinic, patients checked in, had vitals taken and heard the gospel as they waited to see the doctor. Pharmacy students dispensed medicine donated by Blessings International.

One of the days of the clinic, very few patients showed up so the team was able to travel to the church and set up a clinic for the missionaries and pastors serving in Côte d'Ivoire.

The goal of the clinic was to create a relationship with two area villages that could create opportunities for evangelism. One village currently has a Bible study and after the clinic, the missionaries in Côte d'Ivoire hope to grow that Bible study and start one in the other village. Their end goal is to see a Bible-believing church established in each village.

"For anyone on the fence about going on a missions trip, I understand your hesitancy," said Mach. "But these trips are faith-building opportunities and can even be an act of worship."

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,963 undergraduate, graduate and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.