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Nicaragua Trip Reveals the Unity of the Church

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – While many college students were spending spring break on a beach or relaxing vacation, three nursing students from Cedarville University spent their break seeing more than 2,500 patients in Nicaragua on a medical missions trip with Global Health Outreach (GHO). While there, the team saw more than 250 people give their lives to Jesus and witnessed the true meaning of unity in the church.

After landing in Nicaragua March 3, the team attended meetings and orientation before running a weeklong medical and dental clinic at churches in the small village of Los Gutierrez Norte. They worked alongside OB/GYNs, surgeons, dentists, medical students, a physical therapist, an RN and other nursing students.

Between the medical and dental clinic, the team saw more than 2,500 patients and were able to share the gospel or pray with each one. The Cedarville nursing students were able to work in the triage area with patients taking their vital signs and praying with them before they saw a doctor. The team also ran a children’s program and pastor’s conference for four days of the trip.

Senior nursing student Hannah Cloyd has worked with GHO twice before in El Salvador and jumped at the opportunity to work with them in Nicaragua.

“It was a blessing to see how God worked in the lives of the members in the community we were serving,” said Cloyd, from Greenville, Ohio. “In the United States, we see people who have health care readily available yet tend to be spiritually sick. In Nicaragua, they were physically lacking so much including food, health care and fresh water, yet were relying on God. It was a blessing to encourage them. They were so thankful to us for being there, but we were the ones so encouraged by them.”

Hayley Venman, sophomore nursing student from Mentor, Ohio, chose Nicaragua as her first missions trip to experience ministry outside the United States. Her cousin, a medical student at Grace College in Indiana, chose this trip and invited Venman along.

“The Lord used my teammates to show me to be unashamedly brave in sharing the gospel even in everyday life here in the U.S.,” said Venman. “I got to talk to a few doctors about different ways that they incorporate faith into their practices. These conversations have encouraged me to be bold in my daily gospel sharing opportunities. I also saw how powerful prayer is. A few of the people I got to pray with were very moved by my simple prayers. Despite the clunkiness of my prayer that had to go through a translator, God used it to touch the hearts of the people.”

Lauren Ries, a sophomore nursing student from McCordsville, Indiana, took the trip as a precursor to a life of missions she hopes to lead after graduation. Her family had served in Nicaragua in the past and she felt blessed to return to a place that held such good memories.

Ries told the story of one woman who had previously gone to a Nicaraguan doctor and been diagnosed with a simple infection and sent home with antibiotics and instructions to rest. The second day of the clinic, she came to seek help and passed out in the front yard of the church. She had extremely elevated blood glucose levels and was septic. The team was able to treat her just in time with medical resources that had arrived that morning.

“I got to give her medication and pray with her several times,” said Ries. “Slowly, she regained her strength and her fever broke! She also was struggling with her spiritual health. She had wandered from the Lord and when
she heard the story of how everything worked together so miraculously for her, she was astounded. Our doctors were able to share the gospel, and she made a decision to follow the Lord!"

After struggling to feel unity in the church for years, Ries returned from the trip with a more profound understanding of what this unity looks like internationally.

“I spent a year traveling the U.S. and singing in churches that were not the living, breathing body of Christ,” said Ries. “It really makes us wonder “Are we any different than the world? Are we merely a ‘Christian culture’? I had asked the Lord this year to address this nagging thought, and He answered that on this trip.”

She continued, "I had an adorable 78-year-old Nicaraguan man come up to my triage table to be admitted. While I was taking his vitals, I asked him where he was from and asked ‘Is this your church?’ He looked at me with a little smile and said, ‘Oh no! This is just a building! You and I, we are the church!’ I went expecting to minister to others on this trip, and God completely turned that pride around and instead had me humbled by this encounter. We are the church. The body.”

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.