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Hello friends!

Guatemala is amazing, and I thank you for the support and prayers everyone has provided. This trip would not have been possible without each one of you! I have been serving the people of Magdalena Guatemala for 6 weeks now and it has been a wonderful experience.

The other volunteers (aka interns) I am working with are from all different places around the US. They come from New York, California, Texas, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Minnesota, and each of them. We each bring our own personality, strengths, different perspectives (and accents) to serve the people of Magdalena, but we all have the love of God in common.

The house we stay in is called “la casa grande” or the big house. Currently, we have 13 people staying there; the 9 interns, Nivia (the group leader), and a family that works for SI Nicaragua but is with us until the situation there gets better. The house is a blessing and is much more than we need.

Every morning during the week, we get up and go to the community center around 7am, then worship and do devotionals. After devotionals, we head out to the work sites from 8:45-4:00pm every day and serve in Magdalena and surrounding communities. We usually have free time from 4-6pm depending on the night (I usually spend this time editing pictures and videos that I’ve taken throughout the day). Dinner is at 6 pm and we eat in la casa grande most nights but there are 4 theme nights each outreach (every 2 weeks) that we eat at the community center (game night, culture night, solidarity night, and poverty night). After dinner we either continue with the theme night, have time at la casa grande, have a meeting, or have bible study. Although our days are action packed, it’s fun to always be doing something.

So far this summer we have had 3 different outreaches and have served more than 7 different teams. We work/ are with the teams for 13 days and during those days, they go to ministry sites, participate in morning and night activities, and go to Antigua (the nearest town) over the weekend. I have enjoyed hearing the student’s faith stories and have been able to hear what they are learning through being here.

We attend Shoreline City Antigua church on Sundays and I have been asked to join their photo team and have been taking pictures for them. They have an English service and a Spanish service, so we rotate every week which service we go to. The people at Shoreline Church are

very friendly and welcoming to us. I have enjoyed taking pictures for them for it is another way I can serve the Lord and use the talents he's given me for his glory and to reach more people.

I've learned so much about God and about myself during this trip. God has shown me the importance of community and being open to people you barely know. Every day, I'm greeted with the loving spirit of the locals and you always say "buenas días" to those you pass on the street. Everyone invites you into their home and is super welcoming. The sense of community here is incredible, and I feel like a part of Magdalena.

Being down here in Magdalena has shown me that it isn't about the possessions you have or how big your house or if you have the latest iPhone, it's about community and spending time with those who are important to you. Through this and the amount of love I've seen within this community, God's love is apparent in every person I've had the privilege of meeting. They have taught me so much and shown me how important it is to make Jesus the center of your life. I'm overwhelmed with all the acceptance and openness that people have shown me and cannot believe how much that they have taught me. God loves all of us equally no matter what we have.

Thanks again for your support and I'm excited to be here for 3 more weeks and cannot wait to grow and learn.

Jessica Besnier