

From: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldlmealey@gmail.com>
Date: April 3, 2015 at 9:02:42 PM EDT
To: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldlmealey@gmail.com>
Subject: El Salvador-Friday 4/02/15

Hi everyone,

To keep you all posted as to what has been happening today, the Michigan group has spent all day flying in 3 groups. I only know that Doug's group of 5 went to Miami, Honduras, and then El Salvador. I just got off the phone with Doug. Everyone from Michigan has met up in the El Salvador airport, along with 3 other alumni who were flying today as planned from Boston. They will board a bus and go to the hotel which is one hour away. Remember the time difference of 2 hours behind us.

Today those at the Hotel Alamo have been eating their meals on the open veranda, sorting donations, having meetings, and generally relaxing by the pool and getting to know each other, plus getting use to the heat. A couple of alumni, Francis LaLomia and Griffin Rowell, have shopped for food (a daily routine) for Saturday's lunch in Talnique. Francis is heading up the NY contingent and Griffin was trained by Doug to run the NH trip in Feb. 2015, as we moved to Michigan. Yes, he is back again!

Map: So that you can get your bearings of where everyone is, go to www.weather.com and click on the first entry. Then in the gray Search City, etc. box put in Talnique. Click Search. Besides seeing the weather, scroll down to the map and click on it. You will find Talnique, where they are building 4 houses in a Noroeste Rotary Club's "100 House Village" project. San Salvador, the capital, is where the Hotel Alamo is. Scroll in on the bar on the left of the map. If you look southeast from San Salvador, you will find a small blue airport symbol and the road they traveled on to hotel. Honduras is to the north and if you find San Pedro Sula, this is the airport the Doug and others flew into today. Guatemala is to the west and Nicaragua to the east. Going south from San Salvador is the road to the beach and the Pacific Ocean. It is also a major port for ships coming in.

We may or may not hear from Doug tonight but know that everyone is safe and healthy. Until next time, have a great day night. ~Connie

From: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldlmealey@gmail.com>
Date: April 4, 2015 at 11:30:35 AM EDT
To: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldlmealey@gmail.com>
Subject: El Salvador-Saturday 4/04/15

Received 9:48am (7:48 El Salvador time)

Hi everyone (Doug here finally),

Everyone slept well last night after we all had a chance to meet and harass each other. I told everyone last night that the El Salvador National Chorus will wake us all up each morning. Their song will be the same each day. But it was so nice to lie in bed and hear the birds sing or talk to each other.

Everyone has finished breakfast--yogurt, 3 kinds of cereal, meat, scrambled eggs, fruit, coffee and juice. Not bad. We are making our lunches (the usual peanut butter and jelly sandwiches) and will be off soon by bus for our first full day at the worksite in Talnique. Weather is beautiful and we are positive it will warm up as the day goes by. Will try to write later on tonight. ~Doug

Connie's note: **There are 37 people on this Rotary trip: 12 from Corning NY area, 15 from West Michigan, and 10 others, alumni from Doug's previous trips who live in NY City, Texas, Delaware, Mass., and NH.** This is Doug's 16th trip taking Interact students to El Salvador, but his first year with a Michigan contingent, as we moved to Michigan from NH after he retired as a funeral director in Keene, NH. Last year was his largest group-75. There are 3 medical personnel and **15 high school Rotary Interactors on this trip from MI and NY.** The NY contingent is headed up by Francis LaLomia, a former NH Interactor, Rotary exchange student to Belgium, and now a NY Rotarian and college student. People ask me if I have ever gone to El Salvador, and yes, I have three times. But I have never gone with the students, and believe me, I feel more valuable coordinating transportation, like the last two days, and doing what I'm doing for you folks. Plus, it's not so hot sitting in my chair! The high temperature at the hotel will be 94 today but only 89 in Talnique! ~Connie

From: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldlmealey@gmail.com>
Date: April 4, 2015 at 11:09:23 PM EDT
To: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldlmealey@gmail.com>
Subject: El Salvador-Saturday, 4/04/15 PM

Received 9:49pm Saturday 4/04/15

Hola Everyone,

We have just returned to the Alamo from Talnique and everyone is trying to take quick showers. I fear that El Salvador won't be the same with the amount of dirt going down the drain. While waiting around for our showers, to the surprise of most of us, we had a minor earthquake. However, no problems, thankfully.

We have made great strides with our houses today. We are just about done with house # 1 and we just need to slide in some slabs of concrete on the rest of the 3 houses, between the upright posts the natives had ready for us. I am in total shock to see how the students are getting along with each other. For anyone who would come to see us, they would not know the students came from many different places. The adults are mingling with all of the students and are amazed at the maturity level of the entire group.

Tomorrow morning we are going to celebrate Easter by going to Catholic mass with our families we are building houses for. We will be working in the afternoon. With it being Easter, we were concerned that working might not be appropriate. But here they celebrate more the death on Friday and not the resurrection as much.

Unfortunately, we don't miss any of you up north in the cold weather, because the weather has been absolutely perfect today. I often have some of the students on the trip write, as you might get another perspective of what happened during the day. Here is a couple of them. ~ Doug

Hi. This is Sophie Henneman and I am an Interact student from Corning-Painted Post High School in Corning, NY. I was so excited to come on this trip because it is a completely new opportunity for me. I have never been out of the country, so it is really cool seeing a new part of the world. Today I got so dirty at the work site, but it was so worth it! All of the families there were so friendly and willing to help us with whatever we needed. I also got to hold the cutest baby ever!! ~ Sophie

Hey. This is Gavin Poulin from North Muskegon High School in Muskegon, MI. I really did not know what to think about the trip when I first heard that I was going to El Salvador. However, now that I am in the country, I realize that it is a wonderful place to be. Today the group accomplished so many different tasks that could not be completed without our teamwork and communication. I am really excited to spend the rest of the week working on the houses for the people of Talnique. ~ Gavin

From: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldlmealey@gmail.com>
Date: April 5, 2015 at 9:36:59 PM EDT
To: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldlmealey@gmail.com>
Subject: El Salvador--Pictures

From Griffin Rowell --Chaperone, Keene NH Interact Alumni, College Grad, and Griff was in charge of the NH trip to El Salvador Feb. 2015.

The pictures below are images the Salvadorans make in the streets with dyed saw dust (seen here), salt, or paint. This is all part of their Good Friday observance. Some chaperones, alumni, and the NY group got to see them while exploring through a couple towns on Friday.

2 Attachments

[Preview attachment IMG_0757.JPG](#)



[IMG_0757.JPG](#)
 134 KB

[Preview attachment IMG_0759.JPG](#)



[IMG_0759.JPG](#)
 177 KB

From: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldlmealey@gmail.com>
Date: April 5, 2015 at 10:45:34 PM EDT
To: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldlmealey@gmail.com>
Subject: El Salvador-Sunday, 4/05/15

From John Noling -- Chaperone, Rotarian, **Muskegon, MI**

We went to church with the village people today at 10am and it was so special. It was all about brotherhood and peace and good for everyone, a beautiful message from the brother who ran the service.

What a wonderful group of people to be around, Salvadorans included. Nice breeze today. People are getting to know us and approach us more. We are intermingling more and learning more Spanish. We are drinking loads of water, getting very dirty, and are very tired at the end of the day. Our bus drivers have been awesome to watch driving this big school bus on narrow and curvy roads for one hour each way to Talnique. To see what Rotarians, Rotaractors, and Interactors have already done, is impressive. The soon-to-be 100 new homes and a decent water supply with a tank on the top of the hill for pressure is a major international project.

We have accomplished a lot in two short days. When we arrived we saw some posts put in, but not enough. Since then, we have really gotten serious about efficiently working together to get these houses built. We made good progress Sunday afternoon with the posts and the placement of slab walls. We are all working well together and having a great time too. Our wonderful family has been working right along with us all the way. I am glad that I decided to accompany our students from Muskegon.

Two pictures are attached below showing the two days of work and the progress we are making. Click on them to enlarge. ~John Noling

2 Attachments

[Preview attachment IMG_6864.JPG](#)



[IMG_6864.JPG](#)
[1.8 MB](#)

[Preview attachment IMG_6541.JPG](#)



[IMG_6541.JPG](#)
[1.5 MB](#)

From: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldlmealey@gmail.com>
Date: April 6, 2015 at 8:24:58 AM EDT

To: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldlmealey@gmail.com>

Subject: El Salvador-Sunday 4/05/15 #2

Received Sunday 4/05/15 11:40pm

Good evening everyone,

Today was absolutely unbelievable! The weather couldn't be any better--cool breezes, some clouds, and just unbelievable workers.

To add to John Noling's email: We went to a Catholic church this morning and found that the person in charge of the service was a Brother and not a Priest. Before Mass started we had Francis up front doing the the translations with one of our El Salvadoran friends, Lombardo. Three others did the readings and I was called forward to speak on behalf of our group. It was a very warm and friendly experience. Since almost all of us were not Catholic, we had no idea as to what was being said, if it were not for Francis and Lombardo Morales. (Lombardo has worked with Doug about 15 years helping with organizing bus transportation and multiple other logistics in El Salvador since he was an El Salvadoran Interactor.)

We are working in the mountains where the main crop is coffee, which eventually winds up at Starbucks. The coffee beans have been picked and, therefore, the villagers are now out of work. So now we have multiple people from each family working with us to help build their homes. One family has 16 people in it. God only knows how many people will be sleeping in each bed in these houses.

On one of the houses that we built today, the wife and 18-year old son worked extremely hard. I asked the son if he had a father and where he was, only to find that he was sitting under a tree with his shirt off. Well let me tell you, that didn't last long. I called to him to give me a hand and he came over and worked, not hard, but he did work for the rest of the day with us.

Our experience on our homes is almost beyond comprehension. EVERYONE is working, talking and joking with each other as if they have known each other for many, many years. The work ethic of the students, adults and alumni adults has caused us to be extremely ahead of schedule. Our group is devoid of drama queens, lazy people, and non-workers. It is filled with fun loving, extremely hard working people, who just constantly surprise me with what is happening here.

Supper was pasta salad, steamed veggies, rice, steak, rolls and beverage. We sent Francis out to get two ice cream cakes and they didn't last very long. ~ Doug

Now to hear from some of our students:

Hi everyone! My name is Nina Dingel and I'm one of the NY students on this trip. This experience has not been too long yet, but it has been a great one so far. Meeting everyone, students and chaperones, has been so fun; hearing new ideas, experiences and jokes has been both eye-opening and entertaining. In only a few days, we have gone from strangers to good friends. Meeting the locals has been eye-opening as well. They are all very kind and welcoming. The language barrier is not as big of a problem as I originally thought it would be. Today, one of the little girls in Talnique invited me into her home. Her family was wonderful. I am excited to go back tomorrow and do it all over again! ~ Nina

Bienvenidos! This is Leah Weller, a student from **Muskegon, MI**, reporting from El Salvador to talk about my experience. So far it has been a long trip, with traveling and work, but none the less fruitful. The Michigan group arrived late Friday night, as you know, but that did not stop us from bonding just as closely with the others from NY, the alumni, and other Rotary adults. We began work right away Saturday with an amazing family who has been more than willing to help us build their home. Today we attended a Catholic mass, and I was one of three people who volunteered from our group to read scripture to the congregation in English. The children of Talnique are some of the brightest kids I may ever meet in my life. So far I have put blood and sweat into these houses and have earned the title of Bull, which is the highest honor a woman can be called, and I'm proud of the work I have done. ~ Leah

From: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldlmealey@gmail.com>
Date: April 6, 2015 at 10:39:59 PM EDT
To: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldlmealey@gmail.com>
Subject: El Salvador-Monday 4/06/15

Received Monday 4/06/15 8:50pm

Hola. Today we went to the village and started to mortar the walls on our houses. We have stayed away from house #1 as the welder has arrived and is SLOWLY welding the supports to the roof. The truck arrived with the gravel and we made numerous teams to help empty the truck. We then formed other teams to sift the rocks out so that we could start making the mortar.

The group is still working ahead of schedule and is getting along with each other like long lost relatives. To try to explain the team feeling is too hard to adequately explain, other than to say that we have become a family. Parents, you may wish to save these emails in a notebook for your child. Today we all had a chance to have a parrot on our shoulders or fingers. Not sure which family owns it, but they are pleased to see that we are taking notice of this bird.

Took a ride to a volcano northwest of San Salvador and saw a truly outstanding view of the entire capital of the country. It is unsettling though to know that when, not if it blows again, it will eliminate the city of Santa Anna or San Salvador depending on which side of the volcano fractures. ~ Doug

Now to hear from a couple of our team members:

My name is Kelly Copp and I am a member of the Corning NY Rotary Club. This is my first mission trip and my first time to Central America. Francis Lalomia is a member of my club, and it was because of his presentation to our club that I found out about this amazing opportunity. My experience so far has been phenomenal. The people in our group come from a myriad of backgrounds and there is so much to learn from each of them. The people of this country have been extremely welcoming, friendly and helpful, despite the language barrier. To be here, helping these families is an amazing feeling. They are all so appreciative and grateful. My only regret is that I never did something like this earlier in my life. What a great experience for young students and adults, like myself. I look forward to more opportunities in my future. ~ Kelly

Hello everyone. My name is Henry Milek and I am a senior at **Mona Shores High School in Muskegon MI**. This is my first time in El Salvador and on any sort of mission trip for that matter. So far things have been pretty interesting. We have driven around a lot which has given me the opportunity to see the beautiful countryside and pick up on the culture of the locals. Seeing the transition of culture, from the city to the village, is quite shocking, given they are so close and yet so different. The actual work we have been doing in the village has been rough. I have the cuts to prove it, though it is also rewarding, as at this point, we are seeing some nice progress on the houses. Overall, the entire experience is one that I am glad to be a part of, as I think that everyone has a moral obligation to acknowledge places like El Salvador. Good night and to my family and friends, I will see you all soon! ~ Henry

From: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldmealey@gmail.com>
Date: April 8, 2015 at 9:11:31 AM EDT
To: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldmealey@gmail.com>
Subject: El Salvador-Tuesday 4/08/15

Received Tuesday, 4/08/15 11:15pm

Well we have just finished supper of chicken with a sweet sauce, mashed potatoes, steamed veggies, rolls, and soda. Today was "Culture Day." This morning we traveled far west of the hotel to a remote spot, where we have been in the past, to see a beautiful waterfall in Juayua. A power company previously owned this land. On both sides of the falls were impatient plants in bloom. The water looked crystal clean and everyone took to the water for a swim. There are tunnels where people can go through with adult supervision to see the darkness and the cool of the water flowing past them. Needless to say it is a beautiful, peaceful, cool place. While there we met up with people from Finland and England. It is so nice to see how all of us foreigners seem to get along and seek each other out.

We stopped off at a restaurant called Flores de Eloisa. The food was great, the decorations were absolutely beautiful and gave you a sense of peace as we entered and ate.

We traveled further west to Ataco and went shopping in the quaint stores. The students are now beginning to learn how to barter and use their money wisely. Of course, we had a few adults that felt sorry for the natives and would pay any price rather than barter.

The police actually rode in the bus with us today rather than shadow us. Everyone in our group took to them right away and asked them to join us for lunch as our guests. One speaks perfect English and the other not so much. This is the first year we have had police escorts. ~ Doug

Now from our students:

Hi. My name is Shivani Tambi and I'm from Corning, NY. I am a senior at Corning Painted-Post High School. This is my first trip similar to anything like this, and it's been an absolutely amazing time so far! We only have 4 students from Corning, so it's great to have the Interactors from Michigan here as well, in addition to the spectacular chaperones. All of the chaperones are older than they look, which is a compliment, and make the trip all the more fun. Working to build the actual houses has been a great experience, and my 5 foot 1 1/2 inch self has definitely gotten stronger and a whole lot sorer. I have lifted cement panels and gotten dirt on every inch of my body, which, surprisingly, is a lot more satisfying than one would think. I also held a parrot!!! Today was a good break from working though. It was culture day and we had a lot to do. We left at about 8:30 and drove to a picturesque waterfall. It reminded me of home a lot, because upstate New York and waterfalls go together. We had the chance to swim in this waterfall and the water was a blessing, cool and clear. There was a tunnel that went through the waterfall to another side. It was dark and narrow and one of the coolest experiences I've ever had. Terrifying at first, yes, but so so neat. We also got to go to the market and buy things! I love buying souvenirs, and I think I may have enjoyed bartering far more than is considered normal. It was a good day, and as per usual everyone I talked to, including the El Salvadorans, were spectacular. I'd like to end this message with the observation that a bird just flew very casually through the entry way of the hotel. As I've said, truly an experience here. ~ Shivani

My name is Elizabeth Groenhout and I go to **Mona Shores High School in Muskegon, MI**. The waterfall we saw today was hard to explain in words. The beauty of the water was captivating, the mist was rejuvenating, the trees above were secluding, the atmosphere was thrilling, and it was inspiringly beautiful. Yet, today I also experienced more than just a new view of nature. I experienced a new view of the world. As we traveled through the towns, it was not as though it was a different place I was looking at in comparison to our towns back home. It was as though the places I saw outside my window were the same as my home, but set in a third world setting, instead of our first world setting. They still hold hands with those they love, go shopping in town, and walk their dogs down the street. They have a few more dirt roads than back home, but overall the life I see here amazes me with similarities to the life I see back in **Muskegon**. ~ Lizzy

From: John Noling <johnnoling65@gmail.com>
Date: April 8, 2015 at 6:55:14 PM EDT
To: Sue <suenoling@gmail.com>
Subject: JOHNS REPORT FROM TALNIQUE AND SAN SALVADOR

JUST GOT BACK FROM TALNIQUE WHERE MORE MORTARING AND PAINTING WENT ON AS SLABS ARE NOW IN WALLS AND HOUSES ONE AND FOUR HAVE ROOFS NOW. TOMORROW IS OUR LAST FULL DAY OF WORK, SO WE HOPE TO BE CLOSE TO FINISH OR FINISH.

WILL ATTEND ROTARY MEETING TOMORROW NIGHT IN SAN SALVADOR

I WENT TO A SMALLER EVEN MORE ISOLATED CANTON FOR 3 HOURS TODAY INHABITED BY 35 FAMILIES AND WE SPREAD OUT MOST OF OUR DONATED ITEMS BY KIND ON TWO BIG TARPS AND HELPED FAMILIES STANDING IN LINE TO PICK 3 ITEMS PER PERSON IN THEIR FAMILY PLUS ONE PAIR OF SHOES FOR FAIRNESS SAKE. THEY APPRECIATED EVERYTHING AND WERE VERY HAPPY TO RECEIVE. THEY ARE CLOSE TO TALNIQUE BUT HAVE NEVER RECEIVED DONATIONS FROM US BEFORE, SO WE ARE SPLITTING THEM UP THIS YEAR TO REACH OUTLYING CANTONS, BESIDES TALNIQUE.

TONIGHT WE ARE TREATING A LOCAL ORPHANAGE TO PIZZA, POP, AND PINATA, CANDY, ETC. PLUS KICKING THE BALL AROUND WITH THEM.

HAD TO BUY 20 MORE GALLONS OF PAINT AS HOUSES ARE BEING PAINTED VERY NICE COLORS ALONG THE STREET BY THE FUTURE RESIDENTS

WE HAVE IT MADE COMPARED TO WHAT WE WITNESSED TODAY, YET THEY ARE HAPPY AND WORK HARD JUST TO SURVIVE. WE ARE USING MORE SPANISH EVERY DAY AND MEETING MORE AND MORE OF THE PEOPLE IN TALNIQUE AND ELSEWHERE.

SECURITY FOR OUR GROUP HAS BEEN WONDERFUL. THE POLICE LOOK AFTER US AND RIDE WITH US AS NEEDED. HOTEL IS SAFE AND CLEAN AND VERY ADEQUATE FOR OUR NEEDS. STUDENTS ARE HOLDING UP VERY WELL, NO ILLNESSES YET KNOCK ON WOOD.

COATED WITH DUST SO TIME FOR A SHOWER BEFORE BUS ARRIVES WITH KIDS FOR THE PARTY.

FRIDAY WE MAY GET TO SWIM IN THE OCEAN FOR THE AFTERNOON IF ALL GOES WELL PLUS DO SOME SHOPPING

I AM HANGING IN THERE BUT IT HAS BEEN WORK NO DOUBT ABOUT IT AND IT WEARS ON YOU IN THE HEAT, BUT WE ALL WORK TOGETHER AND PITCH IN FOR ONE ANOTHER AS WE FORM WORK TEAMS AND GET EACH PARTICULAR TASK DONE.

BOTTOM LINE IS WE ARE LEAVING THEM WITH FOUR MORE BEAUTIFUL AND STURDY HOMES THEY DID NOT HAVE BEFORE WE CAME AND THE WHOLE TOWN IS LOOKING BETTER FROM WHAT HAS BEEN DONE OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS IN TALNIQUE. INTERACT HAS BEEN INVOLVED FOR 16 YEARS IN THIS AREA BUILDING HOMES, THE LAST FIVE IN TALNIQUE.

OUR FAMILIES WILL BE ABLE TO MOVE IN VERY SOON AFTER WE LEAVE THIS WEEK.

From: "Doug & Connie Mealey" <cldlmealey@gmail.com>

Date: April 9, 2015 at 9:54:03 AM EDT

Subject: El Salvador-Wednesday 4/08/15

Received Thursday 4/09/15 12:10am (Wednesday's report)

I know that this report is late, but we have just said goodbye to the orphans from Jehova Jireh. They only sent half of the kids to us tonight because the rest were grounded and they wouldn't say why. We ordered 27 pizzas and went through all but two of them. These kids were hungry! They also went swimming in the hotel pool and everyone had a great time. When it came time to leave, everyone in our group lined up down the hilly driveway and applauded the kids in the vehicles that brought them here. Tears started to flow when they left, and I knew that the MAGIC of the El Salvador trip had arrived.

We spent about 5 hours at the work site today and were again surprised to see the progress. House #1 and #4 are now roofed. House #3 is all mortared and house #2 is about 1/4 done.

We were pleasantly surprised to see that the Keene, NH houses, built in Feb. 2015, were painted during the last 30 hours. The families were given a 5 gallon pail of paint to paint the entire inside and outside. This amount was not adequate. So we purchased 4 more pails of paint after we met up with representatives of the 7 homes. The families decided on the 4 colors and will share the paint and have contrasting colors on some of the bedroom walls, as well as possibly the front posts at their homes. Several of us spent half of our time helping one woman who was painting her home alone. It was a nice touch for us to help pitch in.

Weather couldn't be more perfect--soft breeze, partial clouds and temps in the low 90's. So far no illnesses, sunburns or any other problems. The big guy upstairs sure is watching over us.

We sent a crew of 11 to one of the surrounding areas and gave these people our donations. It was quite an experience for everyone. Everything went and all were more than pleased at our generosity. ~ Doug

Now for a word from some of our team members:

Hello all. My name is James Hauck. I am a student at Corning Community College in Corning, NY. This is my first time on the El Salvador trip. To be honest, words can't describe how I feel right now. As I have come to know this crew and the local people, I have been humbly impressed and, all in all, wowed beyond words. I have made many friends here and especially a special friend, Javier. He is a local man for whom we are building a house. I have been having such a blast with Javier, and the best part, we have honestly shared nods between us, something only men seem to be able to do. We understand each other and are able to work together, even though we can't communicate. I am in love with this place, the colors, the smells, the sounds, and it is so amazing. I have lived in Corning all my life, and for as long as I can remember, I've wanted to travel. This trip has become my stepping stone. I am sure to do this trip again and many more. I have reached a point where I want to see the world and share in the wonders other cultures can give us. To all you reading this, my favorite part of the day is the moment when I see the work site and all I have done. It's been no picnic and I have nevertheless had more fun than I ever thought I could. I can't wait to come home and share my new found passion and stories with friends and I can't wait until I do this next year all over again. ~ James

Aloha - I am Chloe Grigsby, age 16, grade 11 from **Mona Shores High School in Muskegon**. I find it seemingly difficult to express to you through words (especially to articulate through technology) the magnitude of this trip. But this is where I get back to who I am. I think often we find ourselves in a bit of an intermission phase in our lives, feeling different things about our humanity and why we exist, our purpose. You know you put yourself in a different environment with some people with astounding stories and you get some perspective on that intermission you felt before. You, aside from what you had known to be truth before, get some perspective on who you are, why you are, what you have, who others seem to be, and what you have to give.

About an hour ago some kids from the orphanage went back home. They came for a few hours to hang out with us. One of the chaperones, Johnson Whippie (Interact Alumni, Univ. of NH), was across the table from me with a boy in a wheel chair. His disposition was so gentle and kind, and I just started crying at the beauty in front of me. You can feel that deep. You know there is beauty in the world because you see it in the way those kids faces lit up, the sweat that goes into building four houses for someone you do not know because you simply wish to help to assist, and the raw connection between this group here (old friendships and new). It all just makes me feel alive. I have so much gratitude for being here, at this stage in my journey, and to know these people. It is like I have got everything. "Expect nothing, accept everything." This trip exemplifies that for me.

We hiked to a waterfall yesterday. There was this cave-like tunnel we could swim through. I have never experienced anything like it. The mist on your face and climbing behind that powerful waterfall makes you feel whole in a sense. That is what I love about the outdoors. You can "strip yourself of technology and see what is left." Unreal. Thanks for listening. Mom and Dad I love you so much. Thanks for everything and the endless love I feel from you. You have enabled me to see the world in this way. Goodnight all. Love, ~ Chloe