

Mission Trip with Campbell University School of Law

The trip was amazing. We spent eight days in Panama. We stayed in a small town called Paraiso, in the Canal Zone. The Canal Zone is the area extending five miles in either direction of the Panama Canal. We met many Zonians, Americans who grew up in the Canal Zone which was owned by the United States for much of the Canal's early history. We stayed at a place called Casa Paraiso. The missionaries who staffed it called it a "Christian Surfer Camp." They took excellent care of us, allowing us to use their space to eat and meet. They made sure we were comfortable in our sleeping arrangements and had a place to clean up at the end of the day and wash clothes.

We worked with Heart's Cry Children's Ministry, a ministry consisting of attorneys and social workers. Heart's Cry's mission is "to unite Panamanian, Christian families with children who are abandoned, but not forgotten in Panama." The ministry staffs several orphanages, connects groups like ours with orphans to play with them and show them love, and does legal work for families trying to adopt from Panama. The group was also instrumental in some positive legislative change surrounding Panamanian adoption law. There was an educational aspect to this trip, as we had a few class times with the attorneys at Heart's Cry and learned more about international adoption law.

We also spent three days at Heart's Cry's newest project, Casa Providencia. This is a work in progress. It is an old military barracks turned hotel and now they are attempting to turn it into a state-of-the-art adoption facility for severely mentally and physically handicapped orphans - the most forgotten of the forgotten. We helped pressure wash roof tiles, demolish walls, and paint while we worked there for three days. It was rewarding work and we felt truly appreciated.

Heart's Cry also put us in contact with several orphanages. We went to three separate orphanages to play with the children. We played soccer, brought Bibles and other toys, and just spent great time with the kids. They were extremely happy to see us and simply feel loved. It's amazing to see how happy these kids were to know that we flew down from the US to spend time with them. They seemed so truly gleeful to see us.

We did have time to do some sightseeing. We went on a long train ride up the entire Panama Canal. We also got to see an ancient fort along the Caribbean cliffs and spent a few hours swimming amongst the rocks on a rocky beach. Panama is a beautiful country.

I want to thank Ardmore Baptist Church and the missions group that helped make this trip possible for me. It was an amazing way for me to give back to the children of Panama, and it would not have been possible without help from Ardmore.

Please pass this message along to anyone who might be interested. Thank you so much again for facilitating this trip and making it possible for me. I hope Ardmore continues to send people out into the world for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Matthew Bissette