

Mission Trips – Changing Lives at Home and Abroad

As has been the tradition at SJA for the past 13 years, two Mission Trips are planned, one in January and one in March. The itinerary for each trip is the same and so is the goal: to serve the poorest of the poor in a variety of ways. Students who participate in this life-changing trip are selected from the junior and senior classes and are all unique individuals, no two alike. The Mission trip experience elicits some very powerful responses and this is where these young adults exhibit some of the same reactions.

At an institution called *Jerusalem*, students visit and interact with mentally and physically disabled children and at *Dare to Care*, our missionaries work with children with HIV or full-blown AIDS at *Martha's House*. A home-building project is a staple of the mission trip experience as is a fun-filled sojourn at a pre-school and then a more sobering time spent at the Infirmary. Another ministry stop is to a home for abused and neglected boys.

As our young people go from one very meaningful and moving experience to another, they move outside their individual comfort zones and give and receive love in a series of exchanges that bring out many similar qualities in each of them. Reflection time, at the end of each day, is when the students share their thoughts and feelings in a prayerful atmosphere, allowing them the opportunity to process their mission trip experiences in a very powerful way. This is when it is apparent how very much alike the students really are in their compassion and caring for those to whom they minister, in their genuine concern for the plight of those they encounter.

Following the Mission trips of 2012-2013, this caring and concern has reached a new level. Students returned from both trips, resolved to improve the situation of a family for whom they built a home. This family, consisting of seven children and their father (the mother had died recently), was living in a single-room home with three beds and not much else. No bathroom, no kitchen, and no running water. SJA missionaries on the March trip built a home for this family. When the students returned stateside, they began a Lenten fundraising drive, in which they successfully raised over \$5,000.00 to pay for the house and a truck load of furniture for this family.

The fundraiser was conducted through the C-period classes and Mrs. Boothby's class, Dr. William's class and Mr. Heiss's classes were the winners. An average of over \$70 per student was raised, and one class surpassed \$80 per student. The winners enjoyed a Chick-Fil-A and Dunkin' Donuts breakfast, served during C period class on March 27!

"Everything for a Family with Nothing"

Working in collaboration with Food for the Poor for the past __ years, Deacon Ott indicated that there is a new initiative afoot, in which students will endeavor to raise funds in advance to provide for a home for a Jamaican family, a year's supply of food, a small-business project to help provide a source of income, school supplies, clothing and shoes. If you are interested in contributing to this worthy cause, please make checks payable to St. Joseph Academy, and send to Deacon Bryan Ott, Campus Minister, St. Joseph Academy, 155 State Road 207, St. Augustine, FL 32084. Please email Deacon Ott at bryan.ott@sjaweb.org for additional information.

