

SPOTLIGHT ON MISSION

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Trusting God with the details

Guatemala trips inspire students to live outside their comfort zones

Allison Barron
ChristianWeek Staff

Short-term mission trips are a way for students to get out of their comfort zones and see life through a new lens, which is something Linden Christian School (LCS) in Winnipeg encourages.

LCS sends a group of grade 11 and 12 students to Guatemala every year through Impact Ministries. The students spend 11 days in Tactic, Guatemala, helping with construction of schools, presenting Vacation Bible School programs, visiting hospitals and addressing practical needs.

"The illiteracy rate in the area we visit is over 80 per cent, so that contributes to a cycle of poverty there," says Cam Stephens, Director of Spiritual Care and Campus Life at LCS. "Part of Impact Ministries' vision is to address that practical need along with the spiritual need and introducing people to the hope they can have in Jesus Christ."

"Most of the kids experience a shift in worldview when they return from the trip," Stephens says. "It's an eye-opening experience to see poverty firsthand, a lifestyle they are completely unaccustomed to."

"It also gives them a taste of what it's like to serve. Ignorance is bliss, right? As long as you don't know what's out there, you don't necessarily need to provide a solution. The kids come back with a challenge to ask questions about what they are going to do with their lives now."

Stephens says these trips are powerful because they get kids away from the normal routines.

"Sometimes it's outside of our comfort zones where we really hear God speak," he says. "Here in North

America, I think most of them are used to trusting God for the bigger life decisions, but for the day to day they can rely on themselves or the provision of their families.

"On these trips, they are forced to trust God for every little detail—often they don't know what they will be doing the next day or what they will be eating for dinner."

"They also leave technology behind them—cell phones, TV, computers, iPods—and it's amazing what you can hear from God when you unplug from these things for a while."

Stephens recalls a student from the 2012 trip who wasn't particularly a natural leader, but when they got to Guatemala she was thrown into a leadership role because of her ability to speak Spanish when the rest of the team couldn't.

"They provided translators for us, but since this student had English and Spanish as first languages, her translation was so much better than theirs that they just stepped aside and asked her to translate instead," Stephens says.

"It was hard for her because she isn't that type of person naturally, but she ended up coming back from that trip having sensed that God had bigger plans that she had assumed for her life."

"Most of the kids who go on this trip come back with stories like that. Often they return and want to do more missions, or help out with the needs of our city right here. They come back and their lives aren't allowed to be the same any more after what they've seen and been encouraged by."

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Students in K-Grade 12 raised over \$40,000 last year for local and global ministries.



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