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Lake Union Volunteers Construct New Church

BY BRYAN DEL VALLE

Forty volunteers who, in the spirit of Christmas, believed it was “more blessed to give than to receive,” spent their Christmas vacation on a mission trip sponsored by Maranatha Volunteers International—a non-profit Adventist organization which organizes and implements the construction of urgently needed buildings all over the world. On December 26, 2002, the volunteers arrived in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Steve Yeagley, of Andrews University, coordinated and led out in this 12-day mission experience.

Our group’s primary work focused on building a much-needed, cinder block church. Prior to our arrival, the church members met in a makeshift, open-air structure next to a noisy street. Our first Sabbath was spent there worshiping with this vibrant group of fellow believers. Attendance was so high that some

worshippers were not able to find a place under the shelter.

Jerry Anderson, a seasoned Maranatha volunteer, directed the work on the construction site. Each morning he awarded a prized box of Little Debbie’s to an outstanding individual on the work site. Safety was important, and workers were equipped with hard hats and gloves. As a result, no injuries occurred. Construction continued so smoothly and efficiently that we were able to hold Sabbath services in the new church before we left. Over 200 were in attendance that morning, and Jonathan Leonor, Great Lakes Adventist Academy senior, delivered an inspiring message in Spanish.

Nine days after construction began on this little church, the walls were complete and the roof was in place. The honor of laying the last block—the climax of all the backbreaking labor under the hot tropical sun—went to the church’s head elder. With aching muscles, soiled clothes, and satisfaction in our hearts, we gathered around this man of God as he put the finishing piece on what had now become his new church. He could not hold back the tears as he tried to express his gratitude for what God had done through us.

Having worked hard for several days, we were ready

for a day at the beach. Following a three-hour bus ride, we boarded a catamaran, which easily carried our entire group over the crystal-blue waters to a secluded island beach. After all the hard work our group had done, the sun, warm water, and waves proved a refreshing reprieve.

Aside from constructing a church, we also participated in other ministries. Steve Moulder, an anesthesiologist from California, ran a clinic, offering free medical assistance. Students from Andrews University and Great Lakes Adventist Academy offered assistance by taking blood pressures, giving vitamin B-12 shots, and assisting with the distribution of medication. We were able to help between 50 and 90 people per day.



Bryan del Valle interacts with a group of local children during a pause in the work schedule.

Vacation Bible School attracted an average of 75 neighborhood children, most of whom were not Adventist. For a week they learned new songs, heard Bible stories, and colored pictures. Students from Great Lakes Adventist Academy pitched in to provide gifts for each of the girls and boys.

Though we sacrificed much to help these beautiful people, we all returned with much more than we gave.

Bryan del Valle is an Adventist Theological Seminary student at Andrews University.



A group of Andrews University students traveled to the Dominican Republic to build a new church during Christmas break.