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## Cuba mission trip offers valuable lessons to Andrews Academy group

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## Cuba mission trip offers valuable lessons to Andrews Academy group

If you think back a few decades, this scenario would be unfathomable: a religious group from the U.S. traveling on a mission trip to a formerly-closed Communist country.

But that is exactly what happened last December when 63 Andrews Academy students and sponsors embarked on the trip of a lifetime.

The group arrived in Cuba on Christmas Day and spent the next two weeks working at three different sites on the Caribbean island. One group helped build a kitchen and cafeteria facility at the conference office in the city center, another constructed several structures for the first Adventist youth camp, while another assisted in the construction of a home church.

The students also conducted an evangelistic series for the adults and a VBS program for the children. Students summoned up the courage to tell Bible stories and preach, some for the very first time.

Despite any misgivings, the students and sponsors were grateful for the experience and said it is a trip they won't soon forget — most notably because of the people.

Brook Scott, a sophomore at Andrews Academy, fondly said that the Cubans she met were absolutely amazing. "I made friendships there that I will never forget. You realize how hard they work and how they worship God and thank Him for each and every thing that comes their way."

Also impressed with the warmth of the people was AA sophomore, Sebastian Wade. "The most fascinating thing was how the locals interacted with me and others. I can say they were more outgoing and excited than we were. They had so much enthusiasm even though they had so little."

Ivonne Segui-Weiss, one of the trip sponsors who is from Cuba, said the dedication of the Cuban people moved her to tears on



▲ Entire group at the top of the Loma de la Cruz, a landmark in Holguin 261 meters (458 steps) above sea level

Photos courtesy Rich Aguilera



▲ Students at the work site in the conference



▲ Zoe Drew helping the children with the crafts during a VBS program

more than one occasion. "It is so true, the Adventist people in Cuba are so passionate about their faith. They sing with their hearts; they listen to every word that is preached from the Bible. The Cubans may have little, but they radiate love, compassion and happiness. As I sat there soaking it all in, I couldn't help but think: I was once that passionate, too. Could it be that I was fortunate to leave that system and come to a country where I would be free, but then forgot who the true Giver is, who my Maker is, and who my true Deliverer is?"

SOW Safari, Andrews Academy's biennial two-week mission trip, has been an important part of Andrews Academy's mission since 1986. The name, SOW Safari, speaks to the reason for these trips: **S**ervice through construction of a church or school building, **O**utreach through vacation Bible school, and **W**itness through evangelistic efforts. To date, several hundred people have been baptized through



▲ Sonjun Kim with one of his new little friends in Cuba

the evangelistic component of these trips, including some of the students themselves. ■

Steve Atkins is the Biology and Earth Science teacher at Andrews Academy.