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Shawna Henry



▲ Nursing students Prerna Wilson-Pauliah and Johanna Erickson pose with a group of local elementary school students after learning about good nutrition.

Courtesy School of Nursing



▲ The Nursing mission team gets ready to assist in a union-organized community blood drive.

# Andrews Nursing Students Change the World — One Mission Trip at a Time

By Shawna Trotman Henry

**STUDENTS WERE DRENCHED BY THE PELTING RAIN,** although there was more that dampened the atmosphere as the Andrews University Nursing class of 2019 packed the bus to begin their mission trip to Belize. “Apprehensive,” “nervous,” “exhausted,” “frustrated” — these were the words students used to describe their feelings about the next few days. Thoughts of a spring break in Belize, tropical sunshine, satisfying service and warm smiles were all overshadowed by urgent concerns of exit exams, job interviews and getting ready for graduation. One student recalled, “I wanted to live in the moment, but all I could think about were the books in my backpack that I had brought with the intention of studying during the trip.” Service was not foremost on the students’ minds at this time. Nevertheless, the crew

hesitantly embarked on what turned out to be a pivotal period in their budding nursing career.

Every year, senior Nursing students take the class Intercultural Mission Service in Nursing. The goal of this class is to facilitate an experience where students learn how they can use their profession as nurses to continue the healing ministry of Christ to people of a different culture. This year, nine senior Nursing students, two community service members and two Nursing faculty traveled to Belize for the mission service component of this course. The School of Nursing collaborated with the Center for Youth Evangelism We Care mission trips to serve the people of Santa Elena in Belize.

The students engaged in a variety of service activities that included working alongside the staff of La Loma Luz Adventist Hospital, a very small but busy

medical facility nestled in the quiet country town of Santa Elena. People come from miles away for treatment at this hospital because of the friendly staff and the privacy that this non-government medical institution offers. La Loma Luz also operates one of the few dialysis centers in the country, meeting the needs of many Belizeans, as well as an inpatient unit, newborn nursery, emergency department, outpatient clinic, laboratory and pharmacy.

In addition to providing nursing care, Andrews students conducted a manual inventory of hospital supplies — assistance that was greatly needed by the hospital staff. The hospital was scheduled for an upcoming survey, which required an up-to-date report of their inventory. Because the hospital did not have a computerized inventory method, all supplies were accounted for manually. This tedious and time-consuming task was designated to the already overtaxed director of Nursing. The Andrews team’s help enabled him to attend to managing other demanding nursing processes at the hospital.

The Nursing students participated in service activities within the community, too. On Sabbath, the students led a local worship service. Bea Ade-Oshifogun, chair of the School of Nursing, provided CPR training to approximately 25 local school teachers. Nursing students also provided health education to 60 children from a local school on topics such as healthy choices, rest, activity and nutrition. One nine-year-old confessed that she had never jumped rope before, but what a fun way it was to exercise! The team was touched by the laughter of children learning about the importance of activity, nutrition, rest and healthy choices through fun, interactive activities.

The people of Belize melted the hearts of the students with warm smiles of appreciation. The students were touched by the caring spirit of the hospital employees, who worked alongside their patients to help them overcome challenges threatening their health. Prerna Wilson-Pauliah, one of the Nursing students, recounts how Nurse Letty was willing to be a guarantor for a patient who needed a surgical procedure while the hospital worked out details for receiving payment from a relative who lived in the United States. Prerna says, “That’s the kind of nurse I want to be. I want to

be like Nurse Letty. I want to go above and beyond the call of duty to help somebody if they are stuck somehow and need help. I am really excited to start on this journey. I feel privileged that I get to be a nurse! I get to impact people that really do need a helping hand.”

The joy of knowing they were making a difference was a game-changer for the group. The students experienced a transformation during the seven days of selfless service, cultural immersion and inspiring devotions. The Belizean ethos of love and family was contagious. Student Easter Tamayo discloses that she learned there is a lot of love to share with others. “Oftentimes,” she says, “we focus so much on our own personal worries and forget about the individuals in front of us.” Easter continues, “I didn’t know this country. I didn’t know this culture. I didn’t know these people. But I wanted them to know that although I didn’t know them, although I have not walked in their shoes, I was willing to be there for the time that we were allowed and to help them within my scope and capability.”

A new spirit of camaraderie emerged. Angst, uncertainty and dismay yielded way to attitudes of love, caring and servitude. God truly worked on the hearts of those who served. One student commented that it was a great feeling to be able to help where there was need — the same student would like to become a missionary nurse, serving in an area of need like Belize.

Hannah Smoot, another student, commented on her feelings at the end of the trip. “I no longer felt nervous or apprehensive. I felt like I had done good and had served the people I came in contact with. I left Belize feeling rejuvenated and happy that I went and experienced this with my classmates.”

As these students leave the Andrews Nursing classrooms, they take with them the knowledge that not only have they been gifted to serve but they have been gifted by the smiles and affirmation of heaven, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me* (Matthew 25:40, KJV). ■

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