

Mission Experience to Costa Rica

By St. Luke's Agua Viva team member, Allison Durst

There is a reason why we call it an "experience" here at St. Luke's. Our mission experiences are truly an all-encompassing journey of the mind, body, and soul.



Our recent trip to Costa Rica, in partnership with the non-profit organization Agua Viva Serves, was just that. We had an amazing intergenerational group travel to Los Chiles, Alajuela, Costa Rica to join in an initiative to bring clean water to hundreds of rural homes near the Nicaraguan border.

We were met at the airport in the capital city of San Jose by Agua Viva staff, then headed on a 3-hour journey to the small local town and home base of Agua Viva to Los Chiles. We enjoyed stopping for lunch along the way for

the first taste of the wonderful food we were about to eat for the remainder of our experience. After arrival at the warm and cozy Hotel Carolina and Restaurant, we explored the town before getting settled in for the evening. As our first full day was a Sunday, we were honored and blessed to attend the local United Methodist Church service. What an amazing example of love, community, worship, and praise. It was a beautiful reminder as to why we were led there, and tomorrow the work would begin!

As anticipated, we drove to the town of Medio Queso and worked on different aspects of the project, from helping at the drilling site, to scrubbing, painting, and even welding the sizable water tower, to removing mud and water from pipes so that they can be fitted to connect to numerous homes. We continued this work in shifts throughout the next several days, with love, laughter, strength, and humility.

Another aspect of the experience was visiting INS, the intense English course offered within walking distance of our hotel. Here we were able to meet with the intelligent, ambitious young adults attending the 9-month program. We spent hours with them, offering them an opportunity to practice with native English speakers. We were able to really get to know these students, and as is the case in many of these circumstances in bonding with locals, I believe that we actually learned so much from them! They will forever be in our hearts as they continue their journey to fulfill their dreams for the future.

We then participated in a soccer game with locals and Agua Viva staff, and as you can imagine, it was full of laughter and fun competition. Amazingly, we tied the score, although we're not exactly sure if we were given a little break for all our hard work! After one more day of work

out in the field, we attended a local meeting where we were thanked for our efforts by a strong and proud woman who represented the community. She explained how living without clean water for years had not been easy. Now that was going to change, resulting in better health for her family, and for those in her community. It was followed by song and prayer, and as we were all standing there listening intently and humbly, covered in dried mud, I know that none of us will ever forget that meeting, or our small contribution that means the world to them.

The next morning, and after the last of our daily reflection and debriefing, we hugged our goodbyes to the lovely staff of the Hotel Carolina and departed Los Chiles. This was not easy, as the town, and the work, and the people quickly became a part of us! We then made our way to the larger town of La Fortuna for some fun, adventure, and relaxation. Some of us participated in waterfall rappelling and ATV riding, others enjoyed the suspended bridge tour, coffee tour, and waterfall hiking. All of us relaxed at the resort hotel, appreciating the many amenities it offers.

Lastly and thankfully, our departure and flight from San Jose back to Orlando was uneventful. However, our mission “experience” was anything but. In reflection, it was amazing in so many ways, and will live forever in our hearts, and in the stories we will tell for years to come.

Thank you to Agua Viva Serves for the opportunity to give to this wonderful community.