Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology Students Drew & Leanne share their cultural immersion experience

Cost Rica, April 2013. Drew and I just got back from one of the most meaningful adventures we have taken together. We had the opportunity to travel for 12 days down to Costa Rica and serve in a Catholic orphanage filled with over 70 kids. The ages at the orphanage ranged from 6 months to 17 years old.

Every day was different. The first night we arrived, they welcomed us with a church service in our honor and introduced us to all of the kids. Throughout each day, I mostly helped with the babies; bathing, feeding and playing with them, often carrying two babies in my arms at a time. Drew helped out around the grounds; painting, raking, and fixing bikes for the kids to ride. We also played soccer with the older kids, made bracelets, and did arts and crafts. Drew was able to play his guitar a few nights for the kids, which they loved, screaming, "Play One Direction," and requesting other famous pop singers from the States that they could sing along to. Those nights were my favorite. We left the guitar there for them, since one of the nuns knew how to play and would teach the kids who wanted to learn.

Our days were very full and filled with a lot of laughs and smiles. With both of us speaking very little Spanish and no one on site speaking any English, I tried to recall the three years of Spanish I had learned in High School, while we relied on Google Translator, and God's help to communicate. Despite the language barrier, we were able to build a close bond with the nuns and the children at the orphanage - with a good attitude, showing Christ's love, and taking the initiative to see the need and jump in and help. They had a lot of patience and grace for us, as we fumbled through the Spanish translation book, or repeatedly said, "Como, Que, or Donde" to understand what was being said.

This place is a true treasure. Our hearts were deeply softened and changed by these sweet faces. They have very little, and yet still have joy in their hearts - a lesson we were greatly reminded of. This was such a blessing for us to experience together and will forever leave an imprint on our lives. God kept us safe throughout this entire journey and we definitely felt everyone's prayers. Leaving these kids was one of the hardest things for us, but we hope to visit again in the future and will be continuing to pray for each one of their lives as they grow.
Psy.D. Student, Kelsey Stoos Shares her experience with CAPS

Through our Practicum class we were given the opportunity to attend the 2013 Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS) Conference in Portland, Oregon. This was an inspirational and energizing experience for several reasons. It was enlightening to travel with peers and a professor to a conference that was dedicated to psychologists who believe in Christ. I felt relieved to not have to defend how my religion and career complement one another and instead I was able to surround myself with successful psychologists who are also believers.

My cohort had the privilege of listening to and talking with Kelly O’Donnell, Psy.D. Dr. O’Donnell is a psychologist who lives in France and spoke about global mental health. I felt proud to be a student of Northwest University because we are gaining experience and knowledge about indigenous psychologist and global mental health; hence, we could actively and articulately participate in the discussions. As the participants around the room shared their biographies and educational backgrounds, it became more evident that we are fortunate to be gaining the knowledge of how to serve the underserved as part of our graduate school curriculum. It was a powerful moment to acknowledge that we are among the generation of graduate students who are the first to learn some aspects of multi-cultural psychology and thus it is our personal challenge to share our knowledge and aid in supporting other countries who struggle with mental health care. I see a need and hear a calling; I am ready to take a stand. The zeitgeist is right, so are you ready to take the challenge?

Salome Valencia speaks on her research experience in the Master of Arts in International Care and Community Development

He Who Gives Me Strength

This past semester I had the privilege to participate in a qualitative research methods class. We were given the assignment to perform an interview or observation of a culture that was not our own. I chose to participate in both activities, and I am thankful that I did. My experience was by far one of the most thrilling and perception changing events that I have experienced.

I had the good fortune to observe and interview Karen community members at a local church. The Karen community is composed of refugees who have fled civil unrest in Burma. The first portion of the observation was during their Karen and Burmese spoken church service. The second portion of the research was a one-on-one interview with a Karen church member. It was remarkable to be able to hear the optimism, love and hope expressed by my interviewee. Her family had witnessed and experienced the very worst of civil war, and she had grown up in dire conditions within a refugee camp. Yet, throughout it all my interviewee preached a strong faith in God, and an unquestioning belief that with God, anything can be accomplished. To witness her kind and loving nature towards others showed me that only with our faith in God can we not turn cold, jaded and cruel. That God will heal our wounds and give us the tools to live a fruitful life of service.

My project was only meant to equip me with qualitative research skills, yet I feel as if I was blessed with much more. My class experience showed me the shockingly vast impact that forgiveness can have upon a community. It also demonstrated the necessity of walking beside God and the good that resides in each human being.