

# El Paso Servant Event Trip 2018

We just returned from our trip to El Paso and Juárez and are very eager to tell you about it! First, we would like to thank you for all of your support. This trip would not be possible without your donations and prayers; thank you for your kindness and generosity. On our trip, we built a house for a family in Mexico, met many wonderful people, and grew in love and fellowship with one another. We learned valuable lessons and are excited to continue to serve now that we have returned.



On Friday, our friends and family joined us for the commissioning service at the Chapel, then after a dinner with the Rockport team, we drove to Jillian's house for the night. Early in the morning, her parents fed us a wonderful breakfast, then we headed to the airport to fly to Texas. After a morning of flying, napping, and time changes, we arrived in El Paso at Ysleta Lutheran Mission. We spent the day enjoying the city; we visited Chicos Tacos, a longtime favorite and walked around downtown El Paso.

Sunday morning, we went to Bible study and the bilingual church service at San Pablo Lutheran Church. Then we traveled to Mount Cristo Rey and climbed to the top of the mountain. Despite the strong winds,



we were able to safely make it to the top of the mountain and take some beautiful pictures. We met a native couple at the top who gave us a brief history of the area and let us pet their dogs. Once we climbed back down the mountain and Ben had disposed of all the trash he collected, we stopped by Walmart to purchase important supplies for the week (snacks and



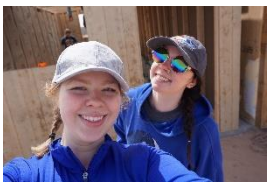
sunscreen). We returned to the mission where leaders Laura and Matt E. made a nutritious dinner of tacos and guacamole for everyone before leading the day's bible study.



We slept in until 7:00 AM Monday morning (9:00 AM Michigan time) and eagerly began our first day of work. We had breakfast courtesy of Pedro and Lucy, who provided most of our meals throughout the week. We then loaded up the van (which earned the name "Sheila") and followed Alonso, our foreman, into Mexico. We arrived at our work site and immediately began



constructing the walls of the house. From the beginning, we worked seamlessly together; everyone had a job to do, even if that job was playing with the family puppy, Scooby. We were blessed to have Matt C.'s playlist to motivate us, and we kept up our high spirits and boundless energy by dancing and singing along. The family we built the house for consisted



of an older couple and their daughter. The first day, we were joined by their granddaughter Miriam, who patiently listened to Riley, Laura, Sophia, and Julia while they attempted to communicate in Spanish and taught Laura and Julia a dance. At the end of the day, we had completed the walls. We went



home, then went to Bahama Bucks to get shaved ice. Matt E. achieved his greatest accomplishment of the week by beating Laura in Jenga, and then some of the group played a creative version of Dominos. Ben and Jillian led the group in Bible study, and everyone went to bed for the night.



Tuesday morning, we set off for a long day at the work site. We completed the electrical work, the insulation, the rafters, and the drywall on the walls. Most of our days on the site involved dancing, listening to Tim's history lessons, enjoying Andrew's imitations, and laughing at Matt E.'s silliness. Since our site had no bathroom, we drove to a nearby gas station every day at lunch, and we stocked up on Mexican pops on



the way. Our lunches varied; some days we had peanut butter and jelly, other days we had local cuisine featuring barbacoa (burritos made with beef tongue). When we returned from the site on Tuesday, we ate dinner with Luis, a friend from last year, who invited us to his home for a traditional Cuban dinner and a variety of Latin dances, then we finished the day with Tim and Julia's Bible study.



Wednesday was another long day at the site. The roofing team, consisting of Jillian, Ben, and Riley, worked hard all day; they placed tar paper, rolled tar, and nailed shingle paper down to finish the roof despite strong winds that hindered their progress. On the inside, the rest of the team tackled the arduous task of drywalling the ceiling. Despite challenges—fitting drywall into unusual shapes, holding up drywall with arms that haven't carried anything heavier than a textbook in weeks, trying to avoid inhaling drywall dust—the drywalling process was nearly completed when we returned home on Wednesday. The evening events



consisted of an activity whose significance demands secrecy. An inspiring Bible study from Sophia and Matt C followed along with some rummy, which was the official game of the trip, and a late bedtime.



Thursday morning heralded the highly anticipated completion of the house but also the long-dreaded mudding of the interior. Mudding went smoothly for the indoor team even though it never seemed to end. The roof crew tackled the task of painting the exterior; they were joined by Julia, who had looked forward to painting all week. Finally, it was time for the ceremony of handing over the keys. The pastor of the mission in Juarez led us in a beautiful bilingual service, Ben



and Jillian performed "Hallelujah", and Matt E. used his Spanish to say a few words and translate for the family as Laura handed the keys to the family. After the house was complete, Alonso drove us through the mountains and to the mercado in downtown Juárez where we got a taste of some Mexican culture.



Friday was our free day, and we spent the morning hiking through the gorgeous Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico. We then headed to Sitting Bull Falls in the mountains. The water was frigid, but that didn't stop Laura, Matt C, Ben, and Sophia from swimming. The whole group was able to climb on the rocks and see several beautiful mountain waterfalls. After a pizza dinner, we returned home for bed. Saturday morning, we woke early again to help with the mission's food distribution. We then headed to the airport, and after Riley and Andrew led us in Bible study, we boarded our flight home. Lee picked us up from the airport in the Chapel mini bus, and the trip was complete.



We will never forget what this experience taught us. We learned to value time spent with others, to love service for the opportunities it creates, to work together as a team and resolve conflict, and above all, we learned the power that God's love has in us. Thank you again for making this trip possible for us; it has been a truly wonderful experience.

In  
Christ,

Laura, Matt E, Sophia, Tim, Matt C, Julia, Jillian, Andrew, Riley, and Ben

