

Report on Mexico Service Trip.

We are so grateful for your donation to humanitarian service efforts in Mexico this Christmas. We feel it's important to report back to you on how your donation money was used and the Christmas miracle that was provided through your generosity. 100% of all funds received went directly to the support of the people in San Quintin Mexico with exception items that were given to the elders including an iron some clothes and 2 lunches where the elder's scheduled appointment fell through and funds were used to provide fish tacos to the elders. In total there were 29 families who were provided with a nice Christmas. Each family was given a large plastic garbage bag filled with items; the larger families received 2 bags. This represents every active (and mostly active) member in the San Quintin Branch of Mexico. The families total around 115 people. Each person received at least 2-3 gift items, and most of them received more. Each person got at least 1 item of clothing with most getting 2-3 items of clothing. Each father/man was given a tool set (either a set of pliers, set of screwdrivers, or hammer). Each mother/woman got at least 5 basic household/kitchen items. Every family with boys got a new soccer ball to play with. Each of the young women/girls got their own blanket. The fathers who worked in construction type trades were given some power tools and hand tools. The little branch was provided with 2 complete computer systems including keyboards, mice, and monitors. The systems were set up and are ready to be used for family history. This was what the branch president felt like the branch was most in need of as a branch. They have the internet, but didn't have the computers for the family history work. There were also carloads of food delivered to families. The food was basic staples such as beans, rice, flour, sugar, and cooking oil, as well as some fruits that are expensive for them to buy and as such are less frequent treats for them to have such as oranges and bananas. Most of those who got food did not have any water/power/bathroom/ heat in their homes.

The little branch eats together after their meetings at the church twice a month, and then goes out to visit the less-actives. We left for the ward, a blender, serving utensils, serving bowls, and a crock pot for their Sunday meals. They were also left with a new sewing machine that the relief society will lend out to member with sewing projects. The sacrament table clothes that were being used appear to be old sheets and were not attractive. 2 beautiful high quality embroidered, white linen table clothes were donated to be used at the sacrament table. They used them the Sunday we attended meetings with the ward on the 28th and heard comments about how beautiful the "Santa cena" (holy supper), sacrament looked.

We had planned on using a portion of the donation money to help buy materials and help build with the family who's home had exploded, however, when we got there we found that the family had decided to go spend the holiday with their relatives in another city. It was also clear that the family had some basic financial means and were making good progress on their home. They were better off than most of the other branch members, so we left some Christmas gifts for their family, but we re-directed the funds into basic needs that were obvious, mostly into food staples.

As we talked with different families and children, we came to understand that many of the kids are generally eating one meal a day, which is sometimes supplemented with a snack, but certainly below basic nutritional standards.

A few quick notable memories.

1. We gave some food items to a young family which included a bag of oranges. They had 5-6 little children. Two of the younger boys, probably between the ages of 5-8 each grabbed onto the bag of oranges to carry them. Then they stopped and started just hugging the bag. They weren't fighting or struggling for the item; they were just super excited and were just hugging the oranges. They laid down/fell down right in the dirt just smiling and giggling with delight, each of them hugging half of the bag of oranges and smelling them. It was pretty cute to see their excitement over a few oranges, which would, seemed like a very routine part of our diet.
2. The first family we delivered presents to on Christmas day, evening, was the Olivera family. They had 6 children under the age of 12. They lived in a little shack with ½" plywood or scrap wood walls. I would guess the home to be roughly 15'x20' and had 1 bedroom, and a living area which was also the kitchen and dining area. It had a tin roof, dirt floor, a cloth for a door, no running water, no power, no gas, and no heat. The mother lit two stubby little candles for light and we used our flashlights as well. We sat and got to know the kids a little bit, and then handed out their gifts. We told them we loved them and that heavenly father knew each of them and he loves them, and that the gifts we brought were to remind us of the gifts we receive from God which includes his son Jesus Christ. We had a nice, but short visit with them, and got up to go. The little kids were sitting on Lindsey and Cami's lap and didn't want to let go. They just held on tight for a few moments and then turned them loose. It was a touching and humbling thing. The families were generally in quite humble circumstances, but very gracious, and friendly. They were so thankful for what was given, and verbalized it multiple times.
3. None of the families knew that this was going to happen so the surprise of the children was priceless. One home we visited was a larger family and we had to bags filled full of gifts. We walked around the corner to knock on the door and one of the children came around the corner and saw us, paused for a moment and , started yelling Santa Claus, Santa Claus and ran into the home to get the rest of the family. We approached the door singing a Christmas song in English. This family was so fun to get to know and wanted to return the gift of a Christmas song. They all got together in front of us and sang a song in Spanish. Honestly, their singing was pretty rough, but the spirit was wonderful.

4. The kids red hair was a big attention grabber everywhere we went. On Sunday Josh went into primary. He was a little nervous so I went in with him to get him introduced to the group since he doesn't speak any Spanish. When we walked in the kids came and surrounded him and just looked at him. I asked the children if they'd ever seen real red hair. They responded that they hadn't. I ask if they'd like to touch it. They all got so excited and started saying yes, yes, yes. Josh was a good sport, he put his head down and they all came up and rubbed his head and got a close inspection. Through the rest of the meeting any time one of them would walk past him they would try to touch his hair. He just smiled and went with the flow.

The trip by the numbers:

Here is a brief summary of what your donation helped to provide to these 29 families. It felt like loaves and fishes to see how the amount of money that was donated could expand and help so many.

400+-lbs. of Clothes, shoes, coats

200+ household/ kitchen items, utensils, pots, pans, bowls, flatware, platters, plates, etc.

100+ hand tools (pliers, hammers, screwdrivers, 2 saws, 2 drills, etc.)

100+ "Choose The Right" bracelets

36 Tooth brushes

30+ Blankets

20 New Soccer balls

18 pair of Reading glasses

4 Irons

4 table cloths

3 Blenders

3 fishing poles

2 Sunday suits

2 computer systems

1 crock pot

1 new Sewing machine

A couple hundred pounds of food basics.

2400 sq. ft. of Christmas wrapping paper

And 24 fish tacos (missionaries are hungry)



Santa's workshop, wrapping division.



Josh loved the missionaries, he said it was almost as good as having Randy back home.



Disneyland wasn't in the budget for this trip, but the kids got their own little mexican disney rides. At a dollar a ride, I think I might prefer it to Disneyland.



Yeah elders. It was such a treat to get to spend most of 2 full days with these 4 awesome missionaries.



The girls thought it was really cool that someone had painted LDS on the walls. Then we found out it was one of the local gangs in the area named, “Los Del Sur” (Those from the South). They were the gang from the south part of the town.



There was no car rental place in this little town, so we worked out a deal with a local used car dealer (who was really a taco shop owner that sold used cars from the taco shop). He rented “Ponchito”, our little

mule to us for 5 days. It had about 250k miles on it and bottomed out on each bump. We, we put another 175 miles on doing all of the running around the deliveries etc.



Here is the dash of the car. It had a piece of a bed sheet stapled and nailed to the dash to cover the cracks. Awesome rental car. No I didn't get the damage waiver insurance. We actually signed the back of a napkin with the person who rented it to us, paid him in advance for the 5 days rental. And drove off.



The beautiful "beach" we visted one evening.



One of the houses we visited.



The kids hauling flour bags for the big food purchase.



The clothes we collected before the trip, as we started sorting them out by age, size and gender.



Some of the kitchen items that were donated.



One of the families we visited. Such nice people.



Part of the sorting process. Each chair represents a family and provided a place to put their specific gifts and get them wrapped.



Another family we visited.



The hallway of the church we used for sorting gifts.



Fresh coconut treats from a street vender. Complete with the souvenir mexican ponchos, that only the tourists wear in mexico.



Nacho Libre Cami



Mandatory Tourist picture. Ole'



Josh got a machete at the local hardware store and was helping the workers in the RV park chop down the olive trees. They were putting in a soccer field.



Another picture in our little rental car.



One of josh's buddies. They are the same age. Bag of gifts in the background. This family was large and got two bags of gifts. This was the home where the little kid went running in the house yelling "Santa Claus".



These two pictures are of our dinner at one of the local taco stands. The first picture was after the first bite when everyone realized the meaning of the spanish word “picante” (spicy). The second picture is a few seconds later when the reality of that word started to set in. Josh’s face explains the sentiment quite well.





Two more of the families we visited. The above picture is the family that sang spanish christmas song for us, and is the primary president's family. The family below is the EQ president's family. The grandma to Lindsey's left, is standing not sitting. So cute and short.





More from Santa's workshop





The two computers systems that we got set up for the branch's family history center.



Fish taco lunch with Santa's helpers. The fish that day was Mako Shark and the tacos were fantastic. On the left is the RS president who helped with details and needs of every family in the ward. This process could not have been done correctly without her help. She gave us 4 hours on Christmas eve, and 11 hours on Christmas day to help get the sorting and gifting process done.

Thank you for your donation and for making this Christmas miracle possible for the members of the San Quintin Mexico Branch.