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A Playground for Costa Rica



INTERNATIONAL
MINISTRIES

I always thought about what it would be like to go on a mission team, go to another country and work to help make someone's life a little easier. However, this was just a thought. I never expected it to become a reality.

From March 17 to 24, I had the wonderful opportunity to be with a group from Woodbury Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and missionary Mylinda Baits and her sister DeeDee. For a week, we worked on a playground for the Mansion of Light Church in La Guacima, Costa Rica.

Pastor Xina Porras and the congregation have wanted a better place for the children in their church as well as the community to have a safe place to play and grow with the influence of knowing they are loved and special. Each child is special to Pastor Xina and the church.

The week was not without its stresses, most of all when the playground materials were stuck in customs. Each day we woke up wondering whether the supplies would make it through at all. During the wait, we were able to do other things, like paint the fence, paint and decorate walls, clean up the grounds, put in flowers, prepare places to put in grass, dig holes and purchase tables and benches. The children of Woodbury Baptist Church had painted tiles for just this occasion, and we arranged them around the table in a beautiful pattern. But the most important thing was building relationships.

Finally, after many tears and a great deal of frustration, on Thursday the call came in that the playground had been given the green light. Immediately a shock of excitement went through those that were present. Within minutes, we had gathered in a big circle to praise God for answered prayer. I don't know who was more excited—the congregation or the team members!

The team and church members worked side by side putting the pieces together. Although not knowing the language made it difficult at times, one of the ways I was able to understand was through hand gestures. We worked through the night until 4:00 am with big flood lights and using cell phones as flashlights, until each piece was put in place.

Finally, on Saturday morning the cement was poured, and that night we had a beautiful dedication for the Memorial Playground. This Memorial Playground is in memory of two children: Oscar, 12, a community member who died in a car accident and Tiffany, 11, a Californian who died from Leukemia. Two children bringing their moms and their two countries together. It was a special bond that will not be broken.

Sunday was the big day. After DeeDee and Nancy cut the ribbon, the children ran through and started going down the slides. I sat back and looked around, seeing parents sitting around the tables and children playing. There were smiles, laughter and joy.

As I left for home, I felt sad knowing that I was leaving new friends I had made and the relationship with the Mansion of Light Church family which I have been part of since 2006. We never know what God has for us, but if we listen and allow him to open our hearts, he will lead us.

If you have ever thought about going on a mission team, it might be that God is calling you to step out of your comfort zone and do it. The blessing you will receive is far beyond comprehension.

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