

Orphanage Outreach: A Reflection

I discovered Orphanage Outreach (OO) after a procrastination session with *Facebook*. It just happened to be advertised in one of the many *Facebook* advertisements that I routinely dismiss, but this advertisement was different. So I clicked and signed up to be on the mailing list and forgot all about OO. A few weeks later I got an email from some guy named Brian Linck. I was even more intrigued and replied and to my surprise a real person responded to my inquiry. A personal response is rare especially when computer generated responses are so easy to create. Fast-forward three or so months and my journey to volunteer with OO was well underway. I knew that little ol' me couldn't afford the trip and that my parents, well they're my parents. So I added a third job to my Oberlin job list, signed up for Winter Term aid, and fundraised.

January 3, 2009 was a big day for me. I had raised almost \$2000 and was on my way to the Dominican Republic (DR). Six hours and two layovers later I was in the DR and a van was waiting for me. I arrived in Monte Cristi an hour or so later and was ready to begin teaching. Monte Cristi is a beautiful little quiet town. My first day at the English institute was mortifying. I stumbled through simple Spanish phrases, randomly spoke Spanglish, and occasionally reverted to all English. Later in the evening I went to the clinic to do rounds with Dr. Turner, a visiting physician from Florida. By dinner time I was exhausted, starving, and thankful for the good food. After the end of the first week I'd gotten more comfortable with teaching and was use to the way things were run. The only thing that I really wasn't use to was the lack of hot water in the bathroom.

My time in Monte Cristi helped me to learn a lot about myself. I really enjoy interacting with people and am unafraid to go to new places alone. I suppose I knew the latter because I came to Oberlin alone. I also learned that I like children a lot more than I thought I did. The kids at *Hogar La Esperanza de un Niño (The Hope of a Child)* orphanage were a delight. I taught a few of them how to knit, which isn't really needed in the DR, but they loved it. I enjoy teaching people that want to learn. One of the greatest feelings I've ever felt was having one of my students get a 100 on a quiz. I also really enjoyed working in the clinic. I like helping people that need me. It was such a refreshing experience to be around people that weren't annoyed with their lives and resentful. I'm actually having a very difficult time conveying how grateful and happy I was to have this experience.



Orphanage Outreach Service Trip

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