

2017 Paraguay Update

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless...(James 1:27). Orphans have been the focus of their lives for the past four years. Brian and Jackie McCobb, directors, as well as their children, have poured their lives into the 28 children at New Path Children's Home with Serving Paraguay. Now the Lord is leading them into expanded roles: Brian as the liaison between government and churches with a new foster care initiative under the movement Paraguay Protects Families, and Jackie as she helps educate and train house parents, foster families, government teams and legal professionals in Trauma Competent Care. They have been asked to speak and share about their foster care initiative not only in Paraguay, but also Colombia, and even India! They remain the legal representatives of the children's home and both help serve as the Enrichment Directors but with their new roles requiring them to be near the capital, they were planning to move after we left. I kept wondering what God was going to have me do on this trip and one day Jackie said, "I don't know how I'm ever going to get all this packed." Then I knew my purpose! I asked Brian to get some boxes because if there is one thing I've learned how to do, it is pack. We packed everything except food and a few clothes to get them ready for the move. The Lord worked everything out so Jeff could help Brian with the heavy items, do some electrical work at the new house and I got to reload the bookshelves. I felt like our purpose was to minister to the missionaries and we had an added bonus of getting to spend time with Jackie's parents, Clint & Rita Vernoy. I served with them in the Venezuelan jungle in 2001 & 2003. I'm so thankful for the special week of laughing, praying and praising the Lord together. The McCobbs were so appreciative for the hands-on help we offered them, since life on the campus of the children's home never slows down enough to do things like packing! We did have space to bring clothes to every child. Thanks to my Mom and my friend shopping the dots, every female on campus received a pair of boots. What a thrill when two girls said they had been praying for boots. I'm so thankful that God cares about the details of our lives.



The McCobbs had requested a builder to help build a barn and a teacher to teach the teachers. The Lord put the Ertzberger family on my heart and I knew He had special plans. We were able to move the dates so Donna could go and get back in time to start school. Jeff helped build a cattle guard, a fence for the cows and work a little on the barn but one day they showed him a house that had structural damage. They jacked up the outside wall of the house, removed three load bearing beams, bricked the remaining portion of the wall then the house sat on the new brick wall. He was in his element because he does that kind of work everyday and knew just what to do to save Milciades' house from collapsing. Jeff is also a preacher and spoke in chapel at the public school challenging the students to read the Word of God and trust Him. I didn't really know how great he had done until Brian told us that the boys usually turn their chairs around so their backs are to the speaker. They didn't move but seemed to hang on every word Jeff said. We're trusting his words make a difference in their lives, knowing God orchestrated every detail.



Stepping into someone's classroom without any instructions as to how far along the kids are in their English class or any other details is a bit daunting, but Donna quickly accessed them and was playing word games with them in no time. She challenged them, gave them a new perspective and she seemed to enjoy every minute of it. She also conducted a teacher's workshop and received excellent feedback with the promise that many were going to incorporate techniques to increase higher level thinking skills and to have students self-assess their own progress. Donna said her favorite parts of the trip were meeting the McCobbs, eating Jackie's popcorn and spending time with the house parents and children; seeing the parents do a Bible study with them, loving them and graciously giving when they have little to give.



My prayer was that Laney's first mission trip would change her life. She turned 12 while we were there and had a baby goat named after her. She and I were dining partners and took turns eating with the house parents and the children. The language barrier was always a challenge as was experiencing the new foods. She even ate a chicken heart but her favorite was the night we had bread and the best hot chocolate ever! She enjoyed her time with Elena, Abbie, Lexi and Kate and like her parents, she said her relationship with the McCobb family was the highlight of her trip. We worked hard, had fun, built and strengthened our relationships. Thank you for faithfully partnering and praying for me!



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