A Ministry of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Fall 2014



Celebrating 10 years of service
Thanks to all of you
2004-2014

FIAT *Happenings*





"Find new ways to spread the word of God to every corner of the world."
Pope Francis

Dear Friends,

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Project FIAT. What began as a summer volunteering in Harlem, New York, has evolved into an international project in El Salvador where we build houses for those in need, provide food for the hungry, send over 200 children to school, offer reading programs for school children and adults, give medical and psychological support where needed, purchase glasses for those with eye problems, support evolving work opportunities for women and men with no interest loans, play with children and over all, form relationships with the people. St. Francis of Assisi invited one of the Brothers of his order to accompany him to preach in a nearby village. St. Francis walked through the village and then turned around and walked back out of the village. The brother accompanying the Saint asked him why they did not preach to the people as St. Francis had told him they were going to do and the Saint answered him by saying that they had preached just by walking through the village.

Project FIAT volunteers in general do not speak Spanish. Yet,their very presence in the village working with the people and providing programs for the elderly and young is their way of preaching. We educate in the faith by example as we carry out Christ command to give food to the hungry,clothe the naked,comfort the dying,give shelter to the homeless,etc. One Hispanic male speaking to another pointed to me and asked who I was. The person answered, "She is a women of God." The Handmaids feel blessed to have been joined these past 10 years by such dedicated volunteers and supporters without whom we could not have accomplished our mission. Truly "You are God's people." - Thank you!

Sister Gloria Petrone, acj

Projects completed


10 houses-Las Granadillas


Elderly center


Retaining wall


Roads


Church in Borja


3 houses- in Limón


Greenhouse


Water tower in Limón

Projects completed (continued)


Bridge


Clinic


Library


Home for Miguel


Pipes in San Marcos


Home for Amilcar


Home for Acosta family


Home for Santiago



Day Care in Zaragoza


Day Care in Las Delicias


Classroom in Ilobasco


Home for Don Cornelio


Helped Aura Humanitus install a playground


Home for Jaime


Water project with Engineers Without Borders


District nurse office


Home for Rosinda


2 Classrooms in Ciudad Arce


Retaining wall


Support wall for a school


Roofs for the elderly


Replacing rusted tin homes


245 Children sponsored


Food program

I started going to El Salvador with Project FIAT when I was 14 years old. Now 21, I've been on the trip a total of 9 times. My experiences in El Salvador have not only had a huge role in shaping the person I am today, but have also rerouted my entire direction in life.

When I think of my first few times in El Salvador, I remember only the feeling that overwhelmed me every day. Shock.

Do they really live in that shack? Why does the drinking water look like that? Where are his shoes? And above all, what the heck are they saying?

It's not that I didn't believe that this family of 6 was living in a makeshift, tiny house, made out of tin siding and a tarp roof with an outhouse in the back. It's that I couldn't. I was 14 and had barely ever come into contact with poverty, or really anyone different than myself for that matter.

My first few times to El Salvador, I stuck to construction projects (which is really funny if you've ever seen my biceps). I mixed cement, moved cinder blocks, dug holes and shoveled dirt till my arms gave out. I was afraid to interact with the kids, partly because of the language barrier and partly because I had no clue how to do it.

Slowly but surely, they unknowingly pulled me out of my comfort zone and towards the person I would become. Something happened, maybe a child offered to help pull my wheelbarrow and I got them to laugh, or maybe a kid grabbed my hand and pulled me into a game. I don't know what it was, but all at once I was falling in love with an entire people.

They taught me about unconditional, often blind love. It might sound cliche, but to a 15 year old, that kind of love is kind of astounding. They didn't understand half of what I said, they didn't know what kind of person I was, if I stole or if I cheated, and there they were hugging me the first time they met me. They didn't know me save for the smile on my face, and still, they loved me? Still they open their hearts to volunteer after volunteer?



I grew up having this experience every summer, learning that love and acceptance should be the default for every new person you meet. I was humbled at their love, and strove to be the person they believed me to be.

My experiences in El Salvador have completely rerouted my direction in life. The love and friendship I found in that country ignited a passion in me I had never experienced. Behind so many of their problems was an underlying common thread: these people have no voice. No voice in government, in their own communities, and oftentimes in their own families. So many people have no way to stand up against the atrocities committed against them or a voice to demand the basic human rights they lack.

To be a voice for the voiceless became my goal. As I got older, I was able to tie this idea to a concrete issue within my own country. The immigrant community often has no voice and no basic human rights. My plan is to study immigration law after graduating this spring.

My time in El salvador has blessed me with some of the best friends I've ever had. If I can't pay back specific people for all the good they have done me, I will take what they have given me and use it to help others.

Sarah Braithwaite

Other needs being fulfilled



School books



Library books



School desks

Medical supplies





September 2014 we celebrated Project FIAT's tenth anniversary in El Salvador. We were fortunate to have had Sister Inmaculada Fukasawa, the Superior General of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart along with Sister Gabriela Espinosa and Sister Nélida Leguen , with us to mark this important event in the life of Project FIAT. They had first hand experiences of our works as they visited various villages and assisted in some of the projects. Monsignor Gregorio Rosa Chávez presided over the Eucharistic Celebration and we were joined by many friends from the villages where we have worked and still work. The joyful celebration continued after the Eucharist with singing, dancing and good food. In the name of all the Handmaids, Sister Inmaculada addressed those gathered acknowledging with a grateful heart the success of these past 10 years and noting the delight that Saint Raphaela Mary must be experiencing as she witnesses the fruits of Project FIAT.





Did you know that the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus have a retreat house in Haverford, PA? Vist www.straphaelacenter.org

The Project FIAT experience has significantly impacted my life in a positive way. In the past, I frequently viewed mission experiences as, "I have the gifts, and I'm going to provide for the needs of the people that I encounter." Through my experiences in El Salvador, I completely changed that way of thinking to, "I have the need to be educated, to be made aware, and to be transformed." Through the many encounters and shared conversations with the people, they have gifted me by opening my eyes, my ears, and my heart. Truly my life has been transformed.

Kevin Moran





All donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

www.projectfiat.org