



Interfaith Service to Latin America

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UMD med students create service learning tradition

Six young med students might have once seemed out of place on a July trip that aims at families and parents with professional skills. But four years of visits by University of Minnesota Duluth medical students has evolved into a model that also fits well with ISLA's ever-evolving tradition of service-learning to Jalapa and Nicaragua.

Adaptability and readiness to jump into any public health project, from stove-building to blood-pressure checks, as well as studious

UMD Med Students to P. 3

With a familiar face as backdrop (top), ISLA team members toured an international student medical school in Havana. Also included in the October Cuba trip were visits to a Casa Materna (right) and other health / medical facilities in different locations on the island.

ISLA team travels to Cuba

Gets firsthand view of their health care model

After years of seeing Cuban doctors in Jalapa and hearing about the system that Nicaragua uses as its model, a team of ISLA medical and health care providers in October got a first-hand look at the controversial island nation's approach and peoples.

Resources were obviously limited, with Cuban officials generally blaming all ills on the U.S. Embargo. But there was also a clear sense of pride as they described general health outcomes

across the population that rival those of North America and Europe.

Touring and visiting facilities as well as having both formal and informal meetings providers and students, offered some other unexpected opportunities. Smiling residents at a womens' nursing home each welcomed their visitors with a song or poetry recitation. ISLA team members were often able to talk with patients, health care providers, students (even some

Cuba Health System Tour to P. 3

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Letter from the Chair: ISLA scholar program still meeting needs

Dear ISLA Friends,

This summer, several of the scholarship students wrote letters to their donors. I wanted to share one of those letters with you, translated below, which is a beautiful example of the hope and gratitude that all of the students expressed. It is a privilege to be part of a program which makes such a difference in the lives of young people and their families.

Warm greetings!

I, Luis Alberto Diaz Cáceres, am a student in high school at the Instituto Rubén Sanabria in the community of

El Limón, municipality of Jalapa, Nueva Segovia, Nicaragua. I am 16 years old and, thanks to the opportunity to become a scholarship student, I am doing well in my studies. It is because of the help that is given to me by the organization ISLA that I have been able to obtain the things I need in order to study in school.

In a very special way I give infinite thanks, first to God and to you, my donor, for giving me this financial help which is what has permitted me to study. I hope that you will continue to give me this help because I dream of going to college



ISLA volunteers will again be part of January scholarship distribution to deserving Jalapa students.

and of being able to earn a degree which will enable me to have a career and thus to help myself and my family. Wishing you success in all your work,

Attentively,
Luis Alberto Diaz Cáceres

Best wishes for a warm and joyful holiday season,
Cecily Brown

ISLA'S mission is to partner with Latin American communities through in health, education, construction and other programs aimed to help them be self-sustainable.

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Remember ISLA in your giving legacy!



With your help ISLA has already made a dramatic difference in the lives of the people of Jalapa and other Nicaraguans. As we sustain and build on those efforts your ongoing support is more important than ever. Please consider the positive impact your legacy gifts, bequests by will or trust, IRA, life insurance or other benefit plans could make through ISLA. Contact your planner or we can help find qualified expert advice.

For more info:

jon@isla.cc or 612-819-8877



A new, but familiar face is joining the ISLA team! Cris Cruz, long-time translator and friend will be the new Jalapa coordinator in January replacing Javier Aguilar who has chosen to move on to other vocational opportunities. Many thanks to Javier and a hearty welcome to Cris!

UMD Med Students continued from page 1

observation of Nicaraguan medical practices has made the connection a win-win.

"I've been really pleased with what students are saying about the variety of experiences they get on ISLA trips," said UMD physician and faculty supervisor Jake Prunuske. "I know people coming back this year had a fantastic trip and were really excited about the things they did."

For ISLA, the chance to bring the next generation of care-givers to a place like Nicaragua is an equally

mutual benefit. Learning and service go hand-in-hand to sustain a relationship, with public health education being a useful connection. The UMD connection will hopefully be a long ISLA tradition.



Women residents at a Cuban senior center were anything but shy and retiring as they greeted ISLA team members on a tour. (above). Health education messages on a van (below) are part of the Cuban systems heavy emphasis on outreach on all subjects. Photos by Grit Youngquist.



UMD med students on the July trip got exposure to a variety of health programs including hands on work (above) and the internal workings of Jalapa Hospital. (below)



Cuban Health System Tour from p.1

American!) about subjects including food, culture and even religion. Few appeared shy about sharing their thoughts and interest in the U.S. - especially given recent thawing of political relations.

"They're certainly very proud of what they've done without a lot of resources," added Dr. Thomas Chisholm. "They have done some good things to be learned from."

"Very informative and eye opening, not what I expected as far as the country, and the people," said Gloria Karl, one of several nurses and a veteran ISLA trip-goer.

A couple of days seeing historic sites and beachfront on the island was also enjoyable. But gaining exposure to a long isolated culture, and the sharing of good will was the biggest benefit of the trip for most.



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