



HELPING HANDS Medical Missions

Delivering compassionate healthcare and the Gospel
to the most needy in the developing world

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Forward to a Friend

Living the Missionary Experience

Non-medical personnel



In this issue of *Living the Mission Experience* we will highlight the essential work non-medical personnel do and the important role they play in each mission. Roles for non-medical personnel include: distributing reading glasses, assisting with crowd control, organizing arts and crafts, and playing sports with the children.

Regina Smutz, from Baltimore, Maryland, calls herself “just a volunteer.” In fact, she is a physical education and swim instructor who has participated in 10 Medical Missions in El Salvador. Regina is an active member of St Alphonsus Rodriguez Catholic Church and is involved in evangelization outreach at her parish.

Sharing her experience here, Regina says, “Volunteering is awesome! You are surrounded by like-minded folks who love what they are doing and see a cause so much bigger than themselves. Faith, family and fun, is how I would describe my mission experience. Faith is evident in daily liturgies, prayer experiences and the setting aside of our normal routines. We are a family there in the welcoming of new folks and the reconnecting with previous attendees. We are a family in our shared meals, masses, bus trips, and responsibilities. We have fun in the work, in the stories, in the sharing, in the trials, in the trying. We laugh, we cry, we learn, we grow ... We become fully human.

Being on a Mission is an experience of love — that keeps me coming back!

Steps to inviting your non-medical family members and friends on a mission:

- 1. Share your personal experiences.** Many people today have the false idea that they have to be an “expert” in a certain area to participate. Let them know that is not the case. All that is needed is a generous spirit and a willingness to serve others.
- 2. There is plenty of work to be done.** People may worry that by not being medical personnel they will get “bored.” Assure them that this is not the case and that there is always plenty to do.
- 3. Give them a list of other non-medical missionaries** who they can call and ask questions. Getting the missionary perspective from others is helpful when discerning whether or not to attend a mission.

Meet the Missionaries



Joann Giambalvo

Home State: Connecticut

Parish: Our Lady of Pompeii, East Haven, CT

This year will be Joann’s fourth year serving on the Playa del Carmen mission with HHMM. Her experiences have also taken her to Ghana, Haiti, and Panama. Joann is an Art Director working for the Legionaries of Christ in New York.

How would you describe your volunteer experience? My experiences truly rejuvenate my soul! I am humbled that Our Lord allows me to serve my brothers and sisters as a missionary.

What is it that motivates you to keep volunteering? My desire to serve those in need and bring Christ to others motivates me. Each mission is a journey for my soul, and an effort of love and sacrifice. There is a great happiness and fulfillment that comes from helping people who are strangers at first, but ultimately my brothers and sisters in Christ.

What has been your favorite HHMM moment or story during your time serving with us? It’s hard to pick just one, but there was a moment from my mission to Ghana. One day I helped a woman who had not been able to read easily for a very long time because she had no glasses. When she finally found a pair she could read with she was so excited that she grabbed my hand and had me dance with her! I will never forget the grateful smile on her face. I was so happy to share that moment with her. The next day she returned to give me a pineapple as a gift of thanks. I was so touched that this woman who had very little of her own shared what she had with me. Often times people who think they have very little to give actually have the most to give. Because of moments like this, the people I have met on my missions have given me more than they will ever know.

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Do you want to inspire and encourage others? Share your mission experience by emailing it to Gloria Madrigal at mission@hhmm.org

Thank you, and we hope to see you soon on a mission!