



## Summer 2017 Newsletter

In every part of the process of planning, fundraising, and participating in a Quest Adventures Service Learning trip, students are set up to step into leadership roles and develop skills that will turn them into lifelong contributors to their communities. Though Quest Adventures sends students on trips to do service, they come away just as transformed as the houses they paint or the stoves they build. From the people they meet, our youth learn that perseverance can overcome any number of obstacles even when hope is hard to find. From working together, teams learn that they can accomplish things as a group they could not do on their own. These lessons equip them with the knowledge and tools to tackle challenges they will face in their own lives in the future.

Another vital piece to Quest's service trips is the research the teams do on the places they will visit in order to contextualize the struggles of the locals and help gain a deeper understanding of the cultures. By the time they go on the trip, students have gained an in-depth knowledge of the hardships the people they are serving have had to endure. Seeing firsthand how strong these local residents still are is a powerful lesson in human resilience. Teacher and chaperone Matthew Johnston reflected, "Having a greater awareness of the struggles of Guatemalan people helped give life to the project, and gave the students a sense of urgency to help out."

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**Team Guatemala**  
Boston Green Academy



**“This community service is just the beginning for me. Knowing I can make a real impact in someone’s life makes me want to do much more” -Rachell González**

Boston Green Academy’s 12-day service trip to Guatemala was full of opportunities for students to build relationships with both elementary school children and elderly residents as well as provide a healthier home environment for Mayan families. Following workshop tutorials on how to assemble eco stoves and water filter systems, the team took on the daily challenge of hiking up steep, narrow paths, transporting heavy stove components to the hilltop homes. The Mayan women shared stories of the lung diseases that they and their children had contracted as a result of constant exposure to smoke from indoor cooking and showed their appreciation of their new stoves by preparing delicious tortillas for our students.

During hot afternoons, Team Guatemala visited local elementary schools and spent time interacting with the children in activities. Using their donated school supplies, the team created games and artwork with sidewalk chalk and played lively soccer games. They also prepared and served lunch for the elderly from the local community center. Even though the residents suffered from limited vision and hearing, our students made warm connections with them through pantomines and gestures during animated picture bingo games.

One student, Zuliannie Martínez, stepped up to become the group’s de facto translator. Without hesitation she worked hard throughout the trip to make sure everyone could

communicate effectively, whether it was just a lighthearted conversation with school children or instructions on how to use and maintain the stoves and water filtration systems. One of the most special moments of the trip occurred after the team's visit to the elderly home. On their way out they noticed some children playing soccer and an ice cream truck. They invited the elders outside, and had an "impromptu ice cream social", giving the elders some sweet interactions with the children. Spontaneous moments like these are some of the most impactful that happen on service trips, giving our students a chance to immerse themselves in the culture and discover how much we have in common with people around the world.





**“Building eco stoves for Guatemalan families fulfilled a need to help others that I didn't know I had.” -José López**

# Team SoDak

## Mary Lyon Pilot High School



**“I truly believe the service trip did me service. Now I see myself as a person who is willing to try new things, a more confident version of myself.”**

**-Patricia Marty**

Quest’s team from Mary Lyon Pilot High School traveled to South Dakota to work with the Oglala Lakota Native Americans. They spent much of the year leading up to the trip studying Native American culture and the history of oppression in the US. During the trip, most of their time was spent building 84 bunk beds, wheelchair ramps to make homes more accessible and trailer skirts to improve insulation and save families money on heat bills during the winter. They also had opportunities to listen and learn from the Oglala Lakota elders.

During the trip, the team built closer, more caring relationships with each other, the community, and the natural beauty of the land. The students spent time with the Lakota elders, absorbing all the wisdom they had to offer. Discussions on themes, such as, “You did not inherit this Earth; You are leasing it from future generations” helped instill a deeper appreciation for nature as well as a new passion for environmental issues. Another powerful takeaway from the elders was the belief, “We are all sacred beings.” Through these meaningful discussions, the students gained a newfound understanding of their own

self-worth and potential as well as a deep respect for the beliefs, traditions, and strength of the Oglala Lakota people.

Since returning from the trip, Team SoDak has committed to organizing an annual school event, beginning this October, to celebrate and bring awareness of the richness of Native American culture. In addition, the team will use their experiences to organize workshops and initiate in-depth discussions with their peers regarding past and current issues that affect Native Americans and how they are facing their challenges with perseverance and courage.





**“I want to show my community that together we can accomplish anything we set our minds to and create a difference that at the moment may seem insignificant,**

but in reality has a lasting impact” -Anthony Pina

## Team NOLA West Roxbury Academy



**“This trip made me realize that teamwork doesn’t only help push you through to the finish, it also brings the group closer together and make us feel more like a family.” - Dhruval Thakkar**

Quest students gain vital and formative perspectives on the world and its inherent inequalities through their service trips. Nowhere are economic disparities more obvious than in New Orleans, where the West Roxbury Academy team worked. In quick succession students saw the vibrant, thriving tourist districts that show no trace of Katrina to the lower Ninth District filled with minority-owned properties. Many still remain in disrepair since the hurricane eleven years ago.

Students expressed frustration with the government’s disproportionate distribution of funds and resources in the wake of the disaster, giving them a new appreciation for the necessity of service work and a healthy dose of skepticism of the fairness of institutions.

Through the service work they did, which included ripping up irreparable wood floors and clearing grassy fields with machetes, the team gleaned energy from “the perseverance and drive of the people of the city.”







**“I really liked working with people who still need help after Hurricane Katrina. Doing the right thing is important. I did it for them, me, and my Honduran grandmother... as I couldn’t be there for her after Hurricane Mitch”**

**-Darius Young**

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**Team Dominican Republic  
Madison Park High School**



**" This experience was an eye opener! I gained new skills in dealing with people who have very high blood pressure and dangerous cases of juvenile diabetes" -Amal Hussein**

Nursing and dental students from Madison Park's Allied Health program traveled to San Jose de Ocoa in The Dominican Republic to learn about health care issues and priorities from another country. They worked with ADESJO, an organization that works to improve the lives of residents. They shadowed professionals in both a rehabilitation center and a hospital. For some students this was their first hands-on experience working with patients. They observed and assisted dentists and doctors as they treated patients in the emergency room.

One of their most impactful experiences occurred in the community of El Pinar. As a group, the students were able to visit homes and conduct medical and dental check-ups for local residents. They took vital signs, conducted oral health check-ups, and shared medical and dental hygiene information. The opportunity to directly help people who may have never received sufficient medical treatment renewed the students' drive to go through the grueling years of nursing or dental school.

Seeing the less-than-ideal conditions that medical professionals have in small communities also made the students very grateful for the abundance of resources available back home. The Madison Park students were inspired by the level of compassion the Dominican nurses and doctors showed their patients. It reminded them of the reason they wanted to enter the medical field in the first place- to help people in need.





**"Seeing so many kids and adults with serious dental problems made me want to work harder towards becoming not only a dentist but an oral surgeon." -Kayleen Soto**



**Team NOLA  
Dearborn STEM Academy**



**"I learned from the people of New Orleans to never give up. If you go through hard times, put your mind to it and keep working hard,; You can get back to where you started... and more." -Manuel Alves**

There are many lessons to be learned from the city of New Orleans. Countless families have had to fight through both natural and manmade challenges just to survive there. Dearborn STEM Academy, another of the Quest teams to volunteer there, picked up on the perseverance that permeates the New Orleans air. They worked through the stifling Louisiana heat and came home with a renewed appreciation for the things they have back home.

The main projects the team tackled were refurbishing a home that had been damaged in

Hurricane Katrina as well as a ranch that houses horses that had been traumatized during the hurricane. Many of the students were anxious about the trip because they were intimidated by working with unfamiliar tools or going to an unfamiliar place. However, in their post-trip reflections they expressed gratitude at having been pushed out of their comfort zones, sharing they are now more likely to try new things and feel more confident in social situations. Especially impactful was the southern hospitality they experienced from the locals, inspiring them to try to be warmer and friendlier towards others upon returning to Boston.





**“New skills I developed on this trip include being able to know I can do something and to never say no without actually trying” -Sal Gray**



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**Quest Adventures' Mission** is to change the lives of students from urban settings by empowering them through travel, community service, and increased self-efficacy to realize their fullest potential as contributing citizens of the world

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