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Student Profiles: Susi Hupp, Wheeling Jesuit University

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Student Profile

Honduras Changed Her

By Leslie Clift

Susi Hupp was just one of the thousands of college students who scrimped and saved to head south for spring break. Only Hupp didn't get to party and relax on the beach with her friends; she went to Honduras to care for those whose problems would otherwise go unnoticed.

A senior at Wheeling Jesuit University, Hupp traveled to Central America with a group of 35 doctors, nurses and students to help the rural Hondurans who generally learn to cope with their ailments and hope they will get better.

"As a student aspiring to go to medical school, I have an intense desire to help others and see their lives improve," Hupp says. "I learned about this trip last summer while I was doing research at Marquette University and decided this is something I really wanted to do."

Honduras was already one of the world's poorest countries when Hurricane Mitch destroyed entire villages and highway systems in 1998, setting the country back by as much as 20 years.

Plagued by widespread malnutrition, pervasive poverty and a harsh environment, most rural Hondurans glean a living on as little as \$1 a day and cannot afford the ride to a treatment center, let alone actual medical care.

In the months preceding the mission, Hupp collected stacks of donations, ranging from coloring books, games and school supplies to clothing, personal hygiene products and vitamins, not knowing just how much the items would be appreciated.

"When we arrived at the different villages each day, hundreds of people would already be waiting in line. Some had even walked several miles," she says. "But they were always happy to see us and thankful for our help."

In the sticky dust and intense heat, she worked alongside doctors and in makeshift pharmacies, dispensing medi-



Susi Hupp

cines and vitamins to more than 1,300 people during the four-day mission.

Hupp says the trip allowed her to experience some of the world's problems firsthand. "So often, we take what we have for granted, like clean drinking water, a closet full of clothes, cars and all the rest. This experience gave me a different perspective on life."

The biology major, like many of the undergraduates on the trip, supplemented her lack of clinical experience with a passion to bring hope and help to those who could use more than a little of both.

No stranger to serving others, Hupp volunteers in the emergency room at Wheeling Hospital and with programs such as Read-Aloud, Adopt a School, Walk and Talk, Special Olympics and volleyball clinics.

"I have always loved being a part of service and volunteer activities," she says. "The Lord calls us to help and

serve one another, and sometimes it means just forgetting about yourself and doing what the Lord has laid on your heart to do."

Having been named to the dean's list for seven consecutive semesters, Hupp shines in the classroom. She is also a member of Psi Chi, the Tri-Beta National Honor Society, the Mendel Club, the Pre-Med Club, Circle K International and the Laut Honors Program.

In addition, she received Wheeling Jesuit University's Gloriam Award for leadership and academic excellence for four consecutive years, and has been involved in various research projects during her collegiate career.

Hupp is also a standout on the volleyball court, where she received the Cardinal Award and the West Virginia Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Student-Athlete Award for her outstanding academic and athletic performance.

Looking back, the future doctor sees her experience in Honduras not only as practical groundwork for medical school, but also as a way to live out what she has learned as a student at Wheeling Jesuit.

"The Lord has used this University to help me grow not only in my faith, but also in my ability to impact the lives of others," Hupp says. "This trip allowed me to live out Wheeling Jesuit's mission of educating men and women to serve others."

For Hupp, who even gave the villagers the clothes off her own back, the experience is one of many she will encounter in a lifetime of service to others. She is already planning to do more medical missions to impoverished regions of the world.

Leslie Clift is a Wheeling Jesuit University relations writer.