

More in Volunteer Service *or* People Powering Mission

It is people that power our mission. It is certainly true that we need resources in order to affect substantive change among communities that struggle under the forces of poverty and isolation. But it is the people who come here, along with those who are already here, who bring life and form to the mission. They are all unique and bring diverse gifts, talents, and personalities. We don't thank them enough. As our mission expands and develops, the *more* of their service takes on creative and innovative expression. All of our volunteers are appreciated and celebrated, but meet a couple of our newest.

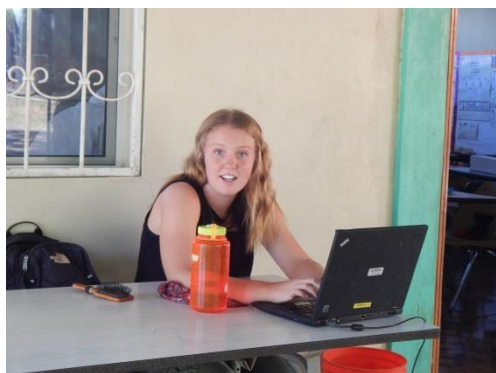
Paul and Sandy Carey



Paul and Sandy were no strangers to service trips in Honduras. They had come a number of times on other service trips in another part of the country. Last summer, they came with their Christian Community, AHOP (A House of Prayer) to Camasca with Shoulder to Shoulder. They spent a good deal of the time at the bilingual school. They felt drawn to the school and the children, and as people of faith, they must have also felt called. As they both approached retirement, they discerned a radical decision: to leave their life in Xenia, OH behind and dedicate a year to working among the people of Intibucá and Camasca. Sandy has been an

educator for all of her professional life, so she is now dedicating her time to assisting the teachers and children at the bilingual school. She's doing an incredible job. Paul is a computer IT wizard. He helps with our technical challenges at the school, but he is also helping in our implementation of CREE, our education mission to the public education system in Intibucá. Neither know Spanish well, but they are getting regular classes. They have both found a new vocation in volunteer service. We hope that they are both as fulfilled as we are grateful for their commitment.

Grace Twohig



Grace is from Minnesota and I think she found Shoulder to Shoulder by tripping over us on a web search for organizations doing development work in Latin America. When she first contacted us, we knew that she would be perfect to head up our nascent mission in assisting public schools. At first, our suggestion might have made Grace a little hesitant, perhaps too much responsibility. But, we eased her into it, and we are so glad we did. She came in June, and she has already given life to CREE -- visiting local schools and helping them to implement world-class, educational tools and

pedagogy. She's been working with Paul and they make a great team. She's committed herself for a year, and we're looking forward to amazing accomplishments from her.

Mariela Rodriguez and Jair Pinedo



Laura and I are professional social workers. It has been our firm belief that we need social workers to become involved in this amazing work. We've been trying to secure MSW interns to work with us since coming to Honduras, even before Shoulder to Shoulder. Our dreams have been realized in establishing a relationship with the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration. This summer they have sent us two MSW candidates: Mariela, who invested in an international social work experience, and Jair, who is completing a social work field placement. They have been

incredible. Mariela spent her time working with our high school students' scholarship program and our Yo Puedo girl's empowerment program with our employee Damaris Quintero who heads up those programs. She has given us a great deal of insight and professional analysis of those programs so that we can make them even more effective in practice. She also teamed up with Project HEAL (more below) to visit families and discern their needs. Some of those families were chosen as families that would most benefit from clean water supplies. She helped distribute the donated, clay water filters to those families. Mariela just recently returned to Chicago to continue her studies.



Jair has made a tremendous impact among the young people at the Camasca High School where he has been every day. He's been doing all sorts of things there, filling in as a teacher on occasion, playing and coaching soccer, and teaching mime classes for the Independence Day parade on September 15. But more importantly, he's provided a safe, secure place for adolescents to talk through some of their emotional, relational issues. There is a great need for that here because young people do not have the type of support they need in facing challenges and frustrations. Jair's job is a tough one as

this is not common here, but he is helping to lay a foundation. He's also teaching the teachers and helping towards establishing structures and systems for health and well-being among the young people of this town. The outcomes are not easily measured. But even so, perhaps Jair offering a few moments of his time to a troubled young man or women will make the difference in that young person's life. Jair will long be remembered here after he leaves us later in September, both for his presence and commitment, but also for helping to bring more support to the youth of Camasca.

Haley Rapp



Haley came to us in January. She's a professional nurse and has mostly acted as our assistant brigade coordinator. When there has been a lull in the brigades, she has worked as a teacher's assistant at the bilingual school. She is a quiet person, and goes about her business in a very unassuming, yet competent and effective, way. Her consistent presence, her willingness to always step in and serve, her accepting personality, has inspired many a positive comment on brigade

Haley standing at far right

evaluation sheets. As quiet as she is, however, it might be easy to not notice how important she has been. In Haley's eight month here with us, she has worked with three different brigade coordinators. In reality, it was probably she that trained the latter two of them in their position. Though she is not about accolades, credit, or attention, she is simply pleased to have the opportunity to serve. In late August, she returned to her home in Oklahoma to further her career as a nurse. Haley, wherever you land, you will be a great caretaker. Thank you for your dedicated service with Shoulder to Shoulder.

Project HEAL (Health Education and Awareness in Latin America)



Nava, Lissa, Dahlia, Judy, and Noelle are undergraduate students at Duke University and part of Project HEAL. They were recently with us for five weeks in Camasca to conduct studies in public and personal health issues. We don't really know how to categorize them. They were not really on a service trip, though they were on a trip as a group and did do service. But unlike a service trip that is here for a week or two, they were deeply, even intimately, invested in the community. They were not really volunteers as we did not supervise their work. Still, they were invested in meaningful service. They conducted their studies (focus groups,

interviews, and trainings) with professionalism, and Shoulder to Shoulder and the people of Camasca will benefit from their findings. But as important, they spent their mornings at the Urbana Primary School teaching the students some English. Though they weren't teachers, they fell in love with the kids. Laura and I can't walk down the street without some 10, 11, or 12 year-old asking us when they'll be back. They have certainly made a great impression here, much like our volunteers. They have furthered our mission in education, establishing relationships of trust and partnership within the community. I'm just going to say that they were volunteers. Thanks, Nava, Lissa, Dahlia, Judy, and Noelle, for becoming part of our mission.

Matt Tibbitts



"Backback Matt," as he handles himself as a blogger (<https://backpackmatt.com/category/blog/>), came to us last year as a school volunteer for a very brief period of six weeks. Actually, he was squeezing us in between his Fullbright experience in Malaysia and his volunteer experience in Chile. He was phenomenal while he was here with us last year and even produced an incredible video called [Changing Camasca](#). But, we thought we got the short end of the stick as six weeks is a very brief time. Apparently, he thought so too because Backpack Matt is back. He comes to us with more experience now, having advanced his

Spanish skills working and backpacking around South America. He's committed himself through the end of our school year in November, working as a teacher's assistant again. He's great -- singing, dancing, and playing games with our kids. They're having such fun they don't even realize that they're becoming fluent in English. But, Matt will not be done in November. He'll return to us in February and try his hand at a new volunteer experience. As we are always swamped with service trips from February through

April, Matt will take on the role of Assistant Brigade Coordinator. I'm sure he'll put the same type of energy and enthusiasm into it as he has at the bilingual school. We look forward to some great things from Matt and perhaps even a new video or two.

And you?

What talent! What incredible commitment. We thank these tremendous volunteers and so many who have come before them. If more people were as invested in the beauty of human giving as these people are, what a different world we would be enjoying. Well, there's certainly opportunity for that, isn't there? If you want to do something that will define the quality and beauty of your life while making the world a better place, it can begin with a simple *click*.

