

Medical mission

A group from Roanoke took medical treatment to people in the far reaches of Honduras.

By Amy Hanek
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A team from Roanoke's Jefferson College of Health Sciences and Carilion Clinic will always remember a trip to Honduras — as will at least 2,000 people they helped.

In October, the team went to Honduras to diagnose illnesses and administer medicine to remote communities there.

The team consisted of Linda Rickabaugh and Michelle Hartman, associate professors at the college; nursing students Courtney Barger, Grace Yu, Kaylee McMahan, Nneka Okoye, Sybil Calhoun and Teal Clark; and Carilion Clinic employees Lisa Allison-Jones, Becky Clark, Monty Gross and Theresa Kern — who served as nurse faculty mentors. Calhoun's husband, Dave, tagged along as a translator, helping the group tremendously, Rickabaugh said.

On Tuesday, Rickabaugh and Jones will host a presentation about the trip. It's open to the public and will begin at noon in room 718 of the college's Reid Center at 920 South Jefferson St.

With the help of an organization called Friends of Barnabas Foundation, the team traveled by bus from a commercial airport in Honduras to mountain villages. Rickabaugh explained transportation was the reason these villages were chosen and that it would take anyone traveling from these communities to a larger city days to make the trip.

Rickabaugh said they brought \$8,500 worth of medical supplies to give out, most of which were children's vitamins. The team also

treated people with aches and pains, respiratory problems, urinary tract infections, tonsillitis and parasites. The children living in these communities are also routinely treated for parasitic infections that result from the lack of running water, Rickabaugh explained.

The small team of nurses and students were able to treat more than 2,000 people in just a week. And after working tirelessly with hundreds of children and adults all day, the students would sit together and talk.

"Each evening we would have a sharing time," Rickabaugh said.

The students kept journals, too.

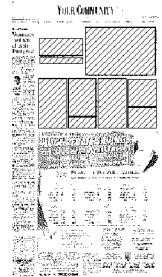
Rickabaugh said the journey for the nursing students began in January 2008. Six applicants were chosen to accompany her on this trip. "Only one had been on mission trips before. Another had been in the Peace Corps in Honduras for 18 months," Rickabaugh said.

Sybil Calhoun is a nurse who has returned to college for a more advanced nursing degree. Even though she has worked in a clinical setting before, the trip to Honduras was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

"The state hospital was the most traumatic for me," Calhoun said.

For Hartman it was about giving much-needed medical assistance, but also giving these students that experience they will remember the rest of their careers.

Cultural competence is considered an integral part of educating every nursing student, Hartman said. And Hartman should know how important a mission trip like this can shape a medical student. After all,



Hartman took a mission trip to Haiti as a graduate student 10 years ago. So, Hartman felt this Honduras trip really brought things full-circle for her.

"Nursing care transcends cultural barriers," she said.

For more information about
the Friends of Barnabas Foundation
go to www.fobf.org



Photos courtesy of Friends of Barnabas Foundation
Nneka Okoye, a Jefferson College of Health Sciences student, and Dave Calhoun, pastor at La Mision Hispana of Parkway House of Prayer in Roanoke, attend to children in Las Marias, Honduras.