

Jamaica Team

Friday, July 6

We have arrived!! We're safe, we are settled, and we are hot!! Everything went off without a hitch, except that (as usual) we were short a van. But, all is well. We rented a 7 passenger and we are sharing Michael's church van for the group. We have had chicken and Pattie's in Yallahs, exchanged money and walked around Morant Bay, and are resting at the house for a few before going to the church building to have dinner. Many of the teens are having trouble calling out on their cell phones... so, here's is your notice that they are safe:) Don't forget to go to the photo gallery and check out the day's photos. Tomorrow's will be lots of fun as the group is planning to hit Reich Falls.

Jamaica Team

Saturday, July 7

Wow!! We have some TIRED people on this trip...with a couple of exceptions everyone was in bed by 9:30 p.m. and slept till 10:00 a.m. And, they've STILL been dragging tired all day!! I think we have all learned that we are way too busy at home and we can do a better job of resting and being still.

After getting up, we went to Boston Market for lunch an hour and a half away. Thomas and Bill went for the lobster, which was REALLY spicy. The rest of us got various vendor's jerk chicken (imagine that!) and festival bread. When we got to Reach Falls, we learned that the new owner was the government. While most of you parents may be relieved, we were all disappointed to learn that no one is allowed to jump from the falls anymore. But, we still had a blast. The guides took us way upstream to an underground cave and several pools to swim in. We finished up by going way down stream, jumping off some smaller cliffs--where Bailey landed bottom first in the water TWICE!--, and swimming some more. It's definitely the coolest and cleanest we have felt in the past two days. With the exceptions of some heads hitting on cave walls, a few falls on the hike, and some hurting feet on the rocks, it was so much fun!!! Bill got his first stab at Jamaican driving on the way back--see, I TOLD him there's no way to miss ALL the potholes--now he KNOWS!! Tonight we just hung out back at the church and Michael and Leila's house. Tomorrow...church in Morant Bay! YEA!! We love you all!

Jamaica First Day of Work

Monday, July 9

Hey guys! Sorry there was no blog yesterday...it was a long day as you are about to hear. Church Sunday was great. The church is really growing and there were 25+ teens and children there--many of whom will be heading to youth camp soon. We spent Sunday afternoon at the beach. Sunday night we went to the church building and the team played games with the Jamaicans after church. It was SOOO much fun. We played both Jamaican and American games from "Anky Panky" (Hanky Panky) to "Fruitbasket Turnover" (Jamaican style) to "Waaaah" (spelling according to Caroline)!! Everyone laughed and laughed. In the meantime, Shana and Sheldon (one of the Jamaicans) left to pick up Phil Barnes from Kingston. His plane was an hour late, and his luggage still hasn't arrived--pray! They didn't arrive back until after 10 and the teens were still raring to leave and go to the gas station. Thus, no blog last night:)

Today ran many experiences and emotions through everyone. We arrived at the work site only to find throughout the day that really only a couple of team members were going to be able to work on the house today. The girls walked up and down the street a bit and just met the Jamaicans (adults and children) and introduced themselves. Very soon many children and adults were at the work site. The rest of the work day was spent playing soccer, baseball with a tennis ball and a board, games and more. Sarah Drayton taught the first day's lesson to the children sitting on the grass near the work site--she did a great job.

The Jamaican adults who have been hanging around have taught us much about mangos, breadfruit, coconut, Jamaican politics, Jamaican geography, and more. One man actually knows more American history and American sports than most of us--from Woodrow Wilson and Andrew Jackson to Hillary Clinton and Arnold Schwarzenegger to Wayne Gretzky and Ty Cobb to Vince Young and SEC football. He gave us an education:)

Perhaps the most humbling part of the day was seeing the inside of the shack that Brother Davis (the man we are building the house for) currently lives in. It is a tiny shack. When you open the door, you open onto a space about 2 feet by 6 feet. Standing in the corner is a narrow board which is his "bed". He lays it down on the floor each night to sleep. Chicken wire and board separate this front section from the tiny rear section where he keeps his belongings. There is a small hole (2'x3') through which he crawls on his hands and knees to get to this section. We could not have been more humbled. We are eager to see him get his new home, and we want to look for tiny bits of furniture (like a mattress) that he can put in it.

Please continue to pray. Satan was attacking; God has responded. We are humbled and are learning!! God has blessed you parents with amazing teens who are truly giving all they have to interact with the Jamaican people. Warning: many of them feel quite "at home and connected" here...you might just have a few missionaries on your hands!

Jamaica Team Tuesday, July 10

Before we get started with today's blog, let us inform you of a need here in Morant Bay. They have "youth camp" for the young people on the island. There are 9 young people in Morant Bay who would like to attend. This year none of them can afford even half of their way. If you would be interested in sponsoring a child from the church here to go to youth camp (\$75), please email Sharon at sfarrell@madisoncofc.org and let her know quickly so that we can inform the church here of how many we can sponsor. These are great kids who are eager to grow.

The work site continues to be amazing. We showed up today with a brand new soccer ball (futbol) and the kids went crazy. Some of the group immediately set to soccer in the street with the boys while others went looking for the girls. Shamoya, a little girl across the street, had her second birthday today. We sang happy birthday, brought her cookies, a drink, and dolls. While she did not understand, her parents were very appreciative. Tomorrow the whole group will get to visit the dad's workshop (at the back of the house) and see where he makes his crafts for tourists. He gave all of our team keychains today.

Today was amazing and very interactive. From soccer to games to coloring to the lesson, everyone is interacting extremely well. When we left, the kids all came running to hug everyone goodbye--kids and adults alike have come to trust and love the group. Bill and Phil stayed late today and got a great deal done on the house. The afternoon for the rest was spent with Thomas, Wes, Jesse, Necole, and Sarah B. at the beach, Shana and Bailey in town shopping for furniture for the new house and other things, and others resting at Michael's house. We are more and more at home here. Please continue to pray for the home and the people!! And, let us know if you'd be interested in sponsoring a child for youth camp!

Jamaica Team Over the Hump Day Wednesday, July 11

Today was definitely over the hump day. It was a long day and the team was tired. The children at the work site were very rowdy--and that was with the girls being at a day's summer classes. However,

most of the walls are finished now. Tomorrow they should be putting on the roof as well as the door and windows.

Tonight, some of the boys from the community where we are working came to church with us. Some of the team went in the van to pick them up. Others are talking about being open to studying with Michael after we leave.

There are no pictures today...for some reason, the computer is not reading that anything is in the USB port to upload the pictures to the computer. Perhaps God is just trying to send me to bed:)

Please pray for tomorrow (Thursday). The teens are wearing down, and it has been a long week. While others were able to put in hammer work today with the walls, Phil and Bill have put in long hours on the house. Please pray for extra energy, patience, and focus for the team. We love and appreciate all of you. Thank you for making it possible for us to be here. You would be proud of this team!

Jamaica Team Friday, July 13

Thanks to those of you who have offered to sponsor a Jamaican teen to go to teen camp. 6 of the 9 teens are now sponsored!! Add that to a finished house and kids crying over leaving each other (both Jamaican and American) and I'd say we've had a successful week.

Yesterday was amazing. After starting with a big downpour, the sun came out. We gave the kids a huge "talking to" about their behavior, and they improved a ton. We actually did both Thursday AND Friday's lessons and crafts since the house was going to be finished. The kids did extremely well. The coolest part was watching the Bibles being given out. Our team had signed their names in the front, highlighted and underlined all their favorite verses, and put the Morant Bay church name and phone number in the front. Kids and adults who had been a part of our community for the week LOVED them. The fact that they had been personalized made them that much better! While the team was really tired, some cried and the community people were really sorry to see the team drive away. Phil and Bill stayed with the Jamaicans to make sure the majority of the house was complete.

Today, the Jamaicans finished the final touches on the house and the team went to Kingston to the strawmarket and to Yallahs for lunch one more time. Then, a few of the team went into town to purchase a bed, household goods, and groceries for Mr. Davis, the recipient of the home, and went to deliver. Once again, we were met by the community with open arms. Everyone was so excited to see us again. Let the kids tell you about the sweet couple across the street and their workshop where they make their crafts...

Thank you so much for your prayers!! We have had a wonderful week. Satan has made himself very clear and has attacked in various forms before and during the trip. But, God was triumphant. We have had a great week. However, you have all been missed, and there is a big group really ready to see friends and family tomorrow. We will call you guys who will be picking us up when we get to Atlanta. Thank you for your continued prayers for both us AND the Saint Louis trip!! God has blessed both groups!