

# Peruvian Journal

## MISSION WORK IN PERU IS EYE-OPENING EXPERIENCE FOR MED STUDENT

*Edited article submitted by Anna Dusenberry, Cumberland Maryland medical student, to the Cumberland Times-News about her spring 2013 mission trip to Peru*

For the past five weeks, I have been given the amazing opportunity to escape from reality and live in another world entirely. Before beginning medical school in August, I have taken a month to live and work in Peru. With the dual purpose of improving my Spanish language skills and giving my time to a part of the world that is in much need of it, I decided to travel to South America. Through a mutual friend I was able to connect with a Cumberland native Ursuline Sister Kathleen Neely.

Sister Kathleen, a member of the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville, KY., has been working as a missionary with the poor of Peru for almost forty years. Currently living in the small village of San Miguel de Pallaques high in the mountains of northern Peru, Sister Kathleen herself is involved in an abundance of projects. For my part I was able to spend my month assisting with two projects in particular.

The first of these is the “comedor.” This is a soup kitchen for children living in and around San Miguel. Each weekday about 110 children are served a hot meal in the middle of the day. Lunch, the main meal of the day in Peru, is an opportunity for the children to get much needed nutrients



and calories. Though my Spanish was a constant source of amusement for the children, I felt proud to be able to spend my time helping in some small way during my month in Peru.

One family with whom I was fortunate enough to visit at their home in the country has four children, three old enough to attend school and visit the comedor. This family lives a hard hour’s walk from the town of San Miguel. Without the comedor these children are without another option for a substantial meal in the middle of the day, buying food in town being far beyond their means. Seeing need such as this first hand has been a powerful experience and being present in person to lend a hand has been unbelievably rewarding.

Unfortunately I was told during my time in San Miguel that there are many more children who could benefit from the comedor, and many more mothers who seek this opportunity for their children, but who have to be turned away because of lack of funds. As it stands with only the currently enrolled children, the existing funding for the comedor will run out at the end of this summer.

The Parish of San Miguel is currently seeking a way to continue operating this very necessary service in the community and welcomes any organizational and/or private donations. As I have seen the need first hand, I can



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attest to the fact that any funds received will most certainly be well used.

The second project of which I have been able to be a part is the building of a Center for Rehabilitation for Handicapped Persons, a place to assist men, women and children in the community who suffer disabilities. This project is currently in the formational stages, and during my time in Peru much progress was made in the building of the second floor. Once fully operational, this center will serve handicapped people from San Miguel and the surrounding countryside by providing therapists specializing in speech, psychological, and physical therapy.

There is currently a huge need for such a space, and at least 80 people are already on the waiting list. The family I previously mentioned, who live an hour's walk from San Miguel, is one example. Their youngest child, 3-year-old Willy, walks with a limp due to a problem with one of his legs. He's as happy and carefree as any child, but as he grows older it will become progressively difficult for him to live his life in the country. This family depends on their land for a living, with limited opportunities for a physically

handicapped person. Therapy in the new Center for Rehabilitation would give Willy opportunities previously unavailable to him.

The experience of participating in projects such as these during my time in Peru has been the opportunity of a lifetime. I cannot begin to thank enough the people who have made this experience possible for me. The Parish of San Miguel along with all the people I encountered opened their arms to accept me more openly than I could have imagined. I hope to one day return to San Miguel and give more of my time there as a volunteer.

As I prepare to continue my studies, the least I can do for this community is to raise awareness about a worthy cause with incredible need. If you wish to make a donation to the Ursuline Sisters' Peru Mission, make your check payable to the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville. Mail your check to: Mission Advancement Office, Ursuline Sisters of Louisville, 3105 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY 40206. Please write "Peru Mission" in the memo line. Your generosity is very much appreciated.

