

Mission team leaves hearts in Guatemala

By CATHY SLUSSER - Special to the Herald

Thirteen Manatee County residents and some friends from around the United States recently took a mission trip to Guatemala.

They traveled with Orphan's Heart, the Florida Baptist Children's Homes International Missions organization.

Floyd and Bobbie Price of Bradenton organized the trip and were joined by Jeff Smith, Don Vautrinot, Britt Williams of Bradenton, Bill and Di Bennett of Parrish, Danny Hall of Palmetto, Angela Burkett of Lakeland, Ty Lim of Pensacola, Christina Spence of Manassas, Va., and Paul Greenspan of Atlanta.



PHOTO PROVIDED: One of the families with their new house

The group represented several churches, but primarily First Baptist Church of Palmetto.

The trip's purpose was to build houses for families and to work at a malnutrition center for children in San Juan, Guatemala.

The team stayed at a hotel in Antigua, enjoying the sights of the historic city with its cobblestone streets, historic buildings and exotic marketplaces.

They were able to enjoy local foods and shopping as well as a zip-line tour 2,400 meters above a canyon at a coffee plantation before beginning their work among the people of Guatemala.

Each day, the eight men boarded a bus to drive 30 minutes outside of Antigua to do construction work.

Earning sometimes only \$1 an hour, it is difficult for Guatemalans to earn enough money to buy a small piece of land on which to build a house, much less the materials for construction.

Many families live under cardboard or thatched roofs or cram several generations into one house. Families headed by a single mother or a disabled father are at a much higher disadvantage.

Using funds donated by Women of Compassion, a support organization of the Florida Baptist Children's Homes, the team built three new houses.

By American standards, these homes were really metal sheds, but to the Guatemalan families they might as well have been mansions. The men poured a concrete floor for each house -- a luxury in Guatemala.



PHOTO PROVIDED: A team from Orphan's Heart, the Florida Baptist Children's Home, went on the trip to Guatemala

Though the men did not speak Spanish, it was evident by the expressions on the people's faces and the light in their eyes how excited and touched they were about their new living conditions.

The group also discovered two families living in homes with broken walls or leaky roofs, so they remodeled two houses in addition to building the new ones.

While the men were building homes, the women traveled an hour from Antigua to San Juan to the malnutrition center begun by the Guatemala City Lion's Club in the 1950s.

The Florida Baptist Children's Home is partnering with this local agency to feed and care for malnourished children ages 2 months to 12 years.

Guatemala has the highest rate of malnutrition in the Western Hemisphere.

While there is food for the children, it is not high in protein or calories and many children are starving to death with full bellies.

News of the malnutrition center's work has spread throughout Guatemala. When parents realize their children are ill, friends and family urge them to go to the center where they leave the children for as long as a year until they are healthy again.

Read more: <http://www.bradenton.com/2011/05/07/3175775/mission-team-leaves-hearts-in.html#ixzz1OcLbPftR>