

Keith Bartolomei and Anita Reddy, '03

Las Matas de Farfán, Dominican Republic



Keith Bartolomei and I spent six weeks volunteering with the Missionaries of Charity at a nutritional center for malnourished children. We worked in Las Matas de Farfán, Dominican Republic, on the western side of the country near the border with Haiti.



Each morning, Keith and I walked from the homes of our local "families" to work at the center. We began each day with all the children shouting our names upon our arrival at the center. Our duties included playing with the children, feeding them, cleaning the dining area, and helping with "potty time." In the evening, we came back to the center to help feed the children dinner. We often ended up playing with the children until bedtime and it was always difficult to leave, especially since the kids liked to block our exit.



In addition to running the center, the Sisters operate a mobile clinic once a week. We helped the Sisters with the clinic, traveling to different villages in the mountains. Most of the people complained of having common colds, headaches, and body aches as a result of hunger, dehydration, and working in the fields.

We also got to help the Sisters with weeklong day camps for the children in the villages. We helped the children with art projects and then gave out prizes for the "best" ones. We also played outdoor games with them, such as basketball and baseball. It was hard to believe how happy and energetic the kids were in spite of the dehydration and hunger from which they were suffering. The last day of camp was always a "fiesta" with singing, dancing, and games.



Mother Teresa, the founder of the Missionaries of Charity order, once said, "We can do no great things; only small things with great love." At the close of our six-week trip to the Dominican Republic, I realized that the people we were sent to help had actually given us much more than we had given to them. They have given me an awareness of the realities of the world and a strengthened faith in God. Witnessing the endless dedication of the Sisters has left me with a commitment to help those who are less fortunate in any way that I can. The hope and optimism I observed in the people I served have given me faith that my prayers may be answered.