

Vasudha Koganti, '04
Oaxaca, Mexico

For my much-awaited summer of service, I headed off to the “enchanted” Oaxaca, Mexico (as Dr. Larow says!). He sure has a good reason to call it his favorite place. The landscape is picture-perfect, the Oaxacan cuisine is scrumptious, and the forecast is almost always sunny! But above all, the smiles and the welcoming hearts of the Oaxacan people are unparalleled to anything I have seen. Jeannine and I even extended our stay by one week because of the warmth and satisfaction we received. We both lived with Mary Lou Doran, a member of the Maryknoll Sisters. Just as she loves the people she works with as her own family, “Grandma” Mary Lou treated Jeanine and I the same.



Jeanine and I with the Maryknoll Sisters.

Through the sisters, Jeannine and I were able to serve at two sites, a medical clinic in the mornings and a neighborhood in the afternoons. Sister Maura and Dr. Fernando run the clinic, where we helped clean, re-organize, observed, and helped to treat patients.



Doing a little cleaning at the clinic.

We even went on house calls with Dr. Fernando in his VW bug! And one of these house calls was the home of Sra. Isabel and her family. Sra. Isabel is an 80+-year-old woman, who suffered from vaginal cancer, and perhaps lung cancer as well. We tried to make her feel more comfortable by bathing her, helping her walk, bringing her treats, but most importantly we kept her company. Unfortunately, Jeanine and I have found out that Sra. Isabel passed away soon after we left, and I believe we were meant to see her through her last days.



My favorite picture of Sra. Isabel- May she rest in peace.

In the afternoons, we went to a neighborhood in which Santos, a 23-year old man who is wheelchair-ridden due to birth defect, and Andrea, a woman who suffers from Down's syndrome live. Andrea never stopped smiling and Santos slowly opened up to us at the end. Between the two of them, and all of their family and friends in the neighborhood, Jeannine and I had many new friends. We played soccer and Frisbee, colored, made crafts, and simply talked.



Santos (right)- I had to sneak him in this one as he dislikes pictures!

Even my pictures don't do justice to my amazing experience in Oaxaca, and to all of you reading who are deciding where to go for your summer of service, at least consider this "enchanted" place.



Jeannine and I with the kids (Andrea- far left).