

Andrew Musits, '07
Chiapas, Mexico

At the beginning of my summer of service trip there were a lot of unknowns. Jill, Cat, and I left for San Cristobal de Las Casa in Chiapas armed with a list of contacts and tentative arrangements. With a willingness to be flexible and work hard, our trip quickly evolved into a very meaningful experience.



Jill, Cat, and I overlooking San Cristobal de Las Casas

Our service site was the Asilo de Ansianos, a nursing home with 20 residents. Located on the outskirts of the city, our commute to work everyday consisted of a 30 minute walk. Staff was very limited. One nurse worked from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm. The only other nurse worked from 2:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The residents were then left in the care of four elderly nuns (one who was wheelchair bound) over night. There were three women that had been taken in to run the kitchen and laundry room in return for meals and housing. With several patients limited to wheelchairs or bed rest, it is quite obvious that the home was understaffed by United States standards. Yet, in spite of their need, the staff was more caring and compassionate than any I have witnessed in the United States.



*Typical housing located around the edge of the city.
The Asilo is located at the end of this street.*



Cat and I doing a social activity some of the residents in the day room.



Feeding Innocente.



Doing range of motion exercises out in the sunshine with Sostenes, one of the residents with advanced Parkinson's Disease.

We ran social activities for the residents, performed basic physical therapy, recorded vital signs, assisted with mealtimes, and bathing! We left the Asilo in the late afternoon to join our host family for La Comida, the main meal and my favorite time of the day. In the evening we taught English at a local language and arts school. Cat and I worked as a team to teach one adult class.



Outside the school with Nolberto and Romeo, the two men that ran the school. They became some of our closest friends in Chiapas.



Cat and I with a few of our students in English class. I learned so much from them as we shared stories about culture, history, and traditions.

Some of our weekend days were free, allowing us to see the surrounding area and culture.



*Can you tell that I had never ridden a horse before?
Preparing to travel to the neighboring village of Chamula. Jose is the boy in
the black hat. He was our "official" guide. He was 13 years old.*

My summer of service was filled with amazing people and unforgettable experiences. We became very close with the residents at the Asilo. Saying goodbye was incredibly difficult. The friends we made during our stay were an inspiration in many ways. The most prevalent was their hospitality. Even those that had next to nothing were willing to share.



A picture with Phil and our host mother, Virginia. You and your family are some of the greatest, most genuine people I know. I cannot thank you enough for the summer we spent together!! Please remember to come visit if any of you are ever in the United States. Les echo de menos. Ustedes siempre estarán en mi Corazón.

*** A special thank you to Jill and Cat. You are two amazing people and I thoroughly enjoyed traveling with you ***