

FEBRUARY 21 UPDATE SENT FROM SENOR FITE:

Dear parents of Mexico trip participants,

Thanks to great teamwork with students and parents as well as the assistance of the amazing Kathy Wesson, we had one of the smoothest checkins ever for our 53 travelers to Monterrey. Thanks to all the parents who braved the difficult weather and driving conditions to get every passenger to the Dayton airport in good time. We were together at the boarding area with an hour to spare. After being de-iced first with some orange foam and then coated with green slime, we were on our way down a freshly snow-plowed runway. We thank the Lord for his blessings and mercy.

In Dallas students has a couple of hours to go with their chaperones and explore the terminal and enjoy lunch. Then we had everyone fill out their customs/immigration forms and made our way to beautiful Monterrey where we happily arrived with 105 pieces of luggage. Only one piece didn't arrive.

We arrived on the Back2Back campus (LDM) around 6:00, unloaded all the luggage, were given a tour of the campus and then enjoyed a meal with the LDM (Lugar de Misericordia / Place of Mercy) students and families down at the large palapa (thatch roofed pavilion). We sorted through the mountain of donations, to help organize them for Back2Back. Thanks for your generosity. Your students have been amazing, engaged in service and have truly impressed the staff here.

It's 10:15 and the kids are settled in bed. We are looking forward tomorrow to a day of worship and play with the children at the Douglas home (8th graders) and Manantiales de Amor (7th graders). Thanks for entrusting your students to us for a life-changing week.

Mike Fite Spanish Teacher

FEBRUARY 22 UPDATE SENT FROM SENOR FITE:

Dear parents of Mexico trip participants,

Today was a great day of worship and play for all the kids. After breakfast the day began with a session with Back2Back as they explained the heart of ministry here with three types of orphans - the double orphan who has lost both parents, the single orphan who has lost one parent and the social orphan who parents who are not functional. They also explained the five levels of poverty that need to be addressed in order to minister to the children holistically - spiritual, physical, educational, emotional and social. You'll have to quiz your kids when they come home. We also talked about the healing power of play which helps address so much of the pain and abuse so many of the children have experienced.

Then the seventh and eighth graders went their separate ways for the day's adventure. The seventh grade headed for the Manantial de Amor home (fountain of love). The report is that they attended a typical high energy Mexican worship service with the youth from Manantial the details of which I think I'll allow your children fill in. This was followed by a trip to a park on a mountain with long steep slides which became a real bonding experience between them and the Mexican youth. It all ended with a pizza and chip party - everything topped off with a heavy dose of chili sauce.

The eighth graders met up with the Douglas Home kids at one of Monterrey's fastest growing churches called Vástago Epicentro (it might be interesting to check out their website) with another 2000 or so worshippers. We heard a very impactful message on honoring our parents. Then it was off to the Douglas home where we connected with kids all day, first with a picnic style lunch. Students helped put together tortas (sandwiches) to serve and eat along with them. Then it was playtime. Some were doing crafts, others playing on playground equipment. The biggest event was about five hours of continuous soccer play on the home's small enclosed cement court - for the most part "los americanos vs los mexicanos" - pure excitement! This was capped off by a grill out with sausages (described as definitely better than your average hotdog).

Both groups ended the evening with a tour of the LDM dental clinic and hope homes where youth are sponsored and are kept in a very homelike environment as they pursue the rest of high school (grades 10-12 preparatory school) or university studies. We ended with a debriefing time with Back2Back staff as each of your children shared a mental picture of the day with joy, laughter and excitement over their new first time experiences.

That's our report for today. Thanks for your prayers.

Mike Fite Spanish Teacher

FEBRUARY 23 UPDATE SENT FROM SENOR FITE:

Dear Parents and Friends, Greetings from beautiful mountainous Monterrey.

Today we had a touch of cool with a drizzle all day and temperatures in the 40's, but it didn't dampen the spirit of the kids. We started off the day with study time and then the seventh graders went off once again to the Manantial de Amor home where they spent the morning playing games and reconnecting with the youth that live there. The group then enjoyed a home-cooked meal prepared with love by the Manantial de Amor staff. In the afternoon, the group was taken to the Dream Project where there is under construction family style apartments in order to change the institutional feel of the home. Last year our seventh graders worked carting materials for the lower level. This week they are working on the upper level. All students are working whole heartedly pushing themselves out of their comfort zones. The unofficial count on cement blocks moved is 700.

The eighth graders had their daily personal devotional time and their small group time after which we headed out to ERJ (El Retiro Juvenil / the Youth Retreat). This home has a ropes course that they have developed to raise income. In using the course, we were supporting the home as well as learning team building skills. It was amazing watching your students combining their physical and reasoning skills to solve physical challenges that seemed impossible on an individual basis, and even as a group in the beginning. It was fun and challenging for chaperones as well. Time after time students experienced the rush of victory through teamwork.

Both groups eventually made their way to the ever famous "Pollo Loco" for dinner, which is a quintessential favorite of our students traveling to Monterrey. We heard only praise for the delicious rotisserie chicken and the chips and salsa bar.

Students returned dirty and tired from a very active day, yet still had energy to play soccer and other activities until our debriefing time, which was one of the happiest and most hilarious times of sharing I have witnessed on one of these trips. I am sure your child will have plenty to share with you on the way home from the airport on Friday.

Eighth graders have a big work day tomorrow at the Douglas home and seventh graders will be back at M de A. Thanks once again for your prayers.

Until tomorrow..

Mike Fite Spanish Teacher

FEBRUARY 24 UPDATE SENT FROM SENOR FITE:

Dear parents and friends.

Greetings from chilly Monterrey. We are expecting our second night in the 30's which means bundling up when we are going to bed -- a little like camping. Tomorrow is supposed to be warmer, but so was today, so say a little prayer if you don't mind.

We are quite proud of our hard-working students. Our seventh graders finished their work transporting probably close to 2000 cement blocks (just an estimate) for the continued work on the second story of the dream project. The work was projected for three days, but the students insisted on pushing through and completed it in two, with singing I am told. The eighth graders at the Casa Hogar Douglas had an extensive area at the entry of the property to overspread with gravel, and finished in far less time than expected. We love seeing the students channeling their hearts for the kids into physical labor for their benefit.

Some eighth graders also painted and then enjoyed a spaghetti meal with the kids from the home in their dining facility. After finishing our work, there was still a couple of solid hours of play with the children of the home. There was soccer, kids playing bouncy ball, checkers, frisbee, table games, a giant checkers board, busy playground equipment, bracelet weaving, the giant slide . . . joyful activity all over the property. Then we made our way back to the LDM Back2Back home base for a delicious home cooked Mexican meal. Once again at debriefing time, students shared their picture of the day, and we realized the amazing number of memories the kids are making that will last a lifetime.

The absolute highlight for the seventh graders was their time with the Manantial de Amor kids which included to their delight a couple of quality hours with the 2014 reigning Miss USA Nia Sanchez and her fiancé actor Daniel Booko - I'll let you look up his TV and film roles. He is actually the son of the pastor of the church from Three Rivers Michigan that also has a group down here at Back2Back this week. The girls all think he looks like Taylor Lautner - so that has created an interesting emotional climate. This couple's ministry with the children very much impressed everyone. Miss Sanchez is quite advanced

in the martial arts and gave a self defense demonstration with her fiancé. They also talked about the importance of prayerfully waiting on God for the right partner in life. What the eighth graders have NOT been told yet is that they are planning a similar experience for them and the Douglas kids tomorrow.

Finally, we found out today that tomorrow we are rising up early and attempting a Skype connection as Back2Back founder Beth Guckenberger addresses our Middle School chapel. It will be something new for us if it can be pulled off. Stay warm. More news tomorrow night.

Mike Fite Spanish Teacher

FEBRUARY 25 UPDATE SENT FROM SENOR FITE:

Dear Parents and Friends.

I have not been able to get to writing today and it is 11:15 at night. So it is going to be brief. We had our first day of sun and relative warmth today. It was exciting to start off our day by joining CHCA's chapel service via Skype and some of our students sharing their experiences with their peers back home in real time.

The seventh graders had their turn at the ERJ children's home and their ropes course including the 30 foot trapeze jump -- which the daring Mrs. Fite even tried. Back at Douglas, it was a day of painting inside and out. The kids did a great job above and beyond the call of duty. This was followed by playtime culminating in a big soccer match in the large field behind the children's home. After this the seventh graders converged with the eighth grade at Douglas for a big hamburger cookout during which we fed I believe over a hundred people, when all was said and done. It was a great treat for Mexicans and Americans alike.

The evening ended with a presentation of Back2Back's child sponsorship program which a good number of CHCA families have participated in over the years. Because of Back2Back, there is a beautiful and growing connection between our CHCA community and those serving the orphans of Monterrey. In fact today I met a former CHCA mother, whose child is now in college, who continues to come here with her husband several times a year to serve the children. After the presentation there was a beautiful time of Spanish worship presented by Back2Back staff and friends. As a final note, even though Miss USA had a change of plans and didn't appear at Douglas, some of our eighth graders were able to talk with her and her fiancé after the worship time which they had attended and had a few pictures taken with her. Pretty cool. The kids will have much more share I am sure on Friday. Buenas noches.

Mike Fite Spanish Teacher

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