

# DBU students serve Peruvian orphans through Buckner

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The DBU team gathers for a group photo with children at an orphanage.

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DALLAS—Forty-seven Dallas Baptist University students, faculty and staff started their summer break by spending two weeks serving orphanages in Peru.

Each morning, the volunteers worked on service projects—repainting walls, doing yard work and repairing broken facilities. During the hot afternoon, they played with the children.

“As soon as they heard us coming, children came running out of all the

rooms,” said DBU junior Lindsay Springer, describing the scene as children met their teams in Lima. “They just wanted to sit in your lap or hold your hand.”

Springer—along with 41 classmates and five DBU sponsors—partnered with Buckner Benevolences and its Buckner Orphan Care International program. DBU students previously have assisted on three other such projects in Russia and Guatemala.



DBU Student Body President Timmelyn Buchanan is squeezed by hug-thirsty children.

Jay Harley, director of spiritual life at DBU and the trip’s coordinator, explained this year’s trip was many new students’ first time to leave the country. “It was a little overwhelming for some of them at first, but all the students performed very well,” he said.

One service project called for DBU students to chip away tile inside an old public restroom, one firmly placed piece at a time. Sledgehammers swinging, shards of tile flying, and the smell—it was not the way most people imagine sharing God’s love with orphans, participants noted later.

Work, however, came to an abrupt stop as several young boys from the orphanage stormed the room to express their gratitude.

"It made me see that even a place like that can be an altar when people are willing to express love and work for it," said Bob Garrett, DBU missions professor, who accompanied the team.

Peru's picturesque landscape, ancient Incan ruins and distinctive culture provided plenty of memories for the Texans. But participants said the most unforgettable sight was dozens of DBU students down on bended knee, presenting new shoes to children at orphanages.

Buckner shipped hundreds of pairs of donated shoes to Peru before DBU students set foot in South America. Brittany Bradley was one of the students who knelt down to help the children tie their new tennis shoes.

"Bowing before these children and helping them with their shoes was a humbling experience. It makes you realize that God has a special purpose for each child," she said.



DBU graduate student Christy Brashier helps children with their new shoes.

"Some of them may have had worn-out shoes. However, these new shoes

mean more; they symbolize that someone cares."

She recalled having collected shoes and supplies for orphans before, but she was never sure what happened after they went overseas. DBU students were as surprised as the children to find personal notes in the shoes written by the families who donated them.

"It makes you realize that the things you give really get to the people who need them," Bradley said.

"The children were very surprised and thankful that we came and that we care about their country," explained DBU student Abe Huerta. He was one of several Spanish-speaking students who contributed his cultural understanding and language skills to the trip and acquired direct feedback from the children.

"Sometimes people wonder what they can do in such a short time, but it really makes a difference to these kids."

While serving at an orphanage in Cusco, the team met another volunteer from New York. "I have been working here for a week already and have not seen a single smile," he told the team. "Whatever you all are doing, keep doing it."

Several DBU students described the journey as a life-changing experience. "The way the students became burdened for these orphans, children they have never seen before and will probably never meet again, is truly inspirational," Harley said.

DBU student Adrienne Anderson asked the children at each orphanage, "What do you want to do in the future?"

One after another, children replied with the same answers. "I want to be a doctor." "I want to be a teacher." "I'm going to be president!"

“We all go away asking ourselves what we can do,” Anderson said. “During this trip, I realized that these children are the future of their country, and there is hope and a future for them.”

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