

Summer missions confirms calling for Wayland sophomore

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PLAINVIEW—Jess Martinez felt uncertain about her calling to Christian service. After all, for a sophomore in college, working with youth can be a little uncomfortable.

But Martinez, a student at [Wayland Baptist University](#), applied for a summer mission position through the Southern Baptist Convention's [North American Mission Board](#) and discovered God could use her to minister to youth.

"It was really a good summer for me, because God showed me that I'm headed in the right direction," Martinez said. "It was a summer of confirmation for me."



Martinez spent the summer working with a church in Burley, Idaho, only 40 miles from her hometown of Twin Falls. She had worked with the church two summers earlier as part of a Youth Evangelism Saturation team. The teams consisted of high school students who helped churches with summer projects. After working with the church in Burley, the youth pastor asked

Martinez if she would consider returning to work as a summer missionary.

“I prayed about it for a while and felt that God wanted me to go there,” she said.

Martinez applied for a summer mission, letting the sending agency know that she already had a destination and job assignment. Once accepted, Martinez knew her destination and summer duties would test the calling on her life to work with youth and help them discover an active faith—something she struggled with through her early teen years.

“I became a Christian when I was 6 years old,” she said. “I was raised in the church. I was always involved because my dad was the pastor. But I didn’t really go that extra mile. But God got hold of me and said he wanted something more from me than just being a Christian.

“There is more to being a Christian than just reading your Bible and going to church. You have to be more involved.”

Martinez felt nervous about her summer assignment. She has no trouble relating to students once she gets to know them, she said, but the thought of jumping into unknown waters left her a little cold. She also said being a preacher’s kid and being home-schooled left her without first-hand knowledge of many of the issues many teens face.

“I know that a lot of students will come to their youth leaders and tell them what is going on in their life. Things are big to them,” Martinez said. “I never really knew how I would handle a lot of those things because I was sheltered. My parents aren’t divorced. I’ve never faced any really big things. I haven’t had those experiences that kids are facing today, so how am I going to relate to them?”

Through the course of the summer, youth talked to Martinez about the issues they were facing. Through those conversations, she learned she had

something to offer those students.

“God just showed me that it doesn’t matter that I haven’t faced those things. He can still use me in those kids’ lives,” she said. “I was kind of surprised by how I was able to interact in those kinds of awkward and uncomfortable situations at times.”

Now back at school, Martinez is committed more than ever to her education and to a career in ministry to high school students.

“I think over the past few years, God has really shown up in my life,” she said. “It has just clicked and made sense, and I want to help those students get it as well, so they can go off into the world or college or wherever they choose and be solid in what they believe.”