

# Wayland student mission trips made eternal difference

October 29, 2024

PLAINVIEW—For native-born Alaskan youngsters Parker and Marty, Wayland Baptist University's nine-year investment in the Kenai Peninsula Sports Camp operated by Alaska Missions made a difference—an eternal difference.

"In 2015, we were the first group that went to help get the camp started," explained Donnie Brown, director of spiritual life at Wayland. "We've been going back pretty much every year since then."

Making his second visit to Alaska, Alex Clements was among five students to make the trip during the summer break. He got the opportunity to lead Parker and Marty to Christ. They are two of five kids who made professions of faith in Christ during the time the Wayland team was in Alaska.

Led by Wayland's offensive line coordinator, Marcos Hinojos Jr., other Alaska team members included Annalicia Hernandez, Mikayla Shires, Jazmine Jackson and Dylan McDougal.

They recently were joined by baseball Coach Todd Weldon and students Jeremy Bolligar and Olivia Fisher as they spoke in a chapel service highlighting three of Wayland's summer missions programs.

Weldon and Bolligar worked at a Students International baseball camp in Jarabacoa, Dominican Republic, while Fisher worked with Go Now Missions, a Texas Baptist missions partner, in Zwolle, La.

# Making eternal impact in Alaska

Clements told students attending the Wayland chapel service about sharing a dorm with Parker and Marty and learning from them.

“They told us a lot of stories about how they lived—like how they had to go and hunt for a lot of their food, like literally going to hunt for whales and seals,” Clements said.

As they grew to understand each other, Clements and the other Wayland students shared their faith with Parker and Marty. By the end of the week, “those guys had been so receptive to what we were saying that they ended up being saved. I really saw God move through them.”

Hinojos confessed he initially wondered what kind of an impact five people from a Texas Baptist school could make in Alaska.

“But God kind of slapped me in the face with what he did with this group of five people,” Hinojos said. “Six kids came to accept the Lord, and their lives were changed not just in the moment, but forever—for eternity.”

“It doesn’t matter how young you are. It doesn’t matter where you’re at in your faith journey. None of that matters,” the football coach said. “What’s important is that you answer the call when the Lord says it’s time, and these five did. They dramatically changed the course of those kids’ lives forever. It was neat for me to see.”

Teaching kids to play football was way out of Shires’ comfort zone, yet God was teaching her as she used sports to share the gospel with kids.

“Alaska is known as one of the most beautiful places on earth, but there is also home of some of the most broken and lost souls. And you don’t know that until you go out there,” Shires said.

“So, God just kind of put on my heart that I just need to be a missionary wherever I go. You never know who’s going to be needing the gospel. God used this trip to help me to realize that every single person, no matter where you are, needs the gospel.”

## **Using baseball to reach youth in Dominican Republic**

At the baseball camp in the Dominican Republic, a devotional time provided Bolligar an opportunity to share his faith with young players.

“At the end of the week, I got the opportunity to lead a devotional for them,” he said. “I never thought I would lead a devotional, and I never thought I’d be on stage speaking at chapel either. I just saw that the kids through the week just started getting more attentive and started asking a lot more questions. That’s the way I saw God work.”

His baseball coach also got opportunities to share his faith with young players.

“I felt really the Holy Spirit placed on my heart to communicate to those kids because in the Dominican Republic baseball is huge. It’s an opportunity to a better way of life,” Weldon said.

The kids who attended baseball camp might never make it to the major leagues in the United States, but the Wayland group used their interest in sports to introduce them to new life in Christ. Weldon emphasized “the importance of their relationship with Jesus and growing closer to him.”

## **Changing lives**

Fischer spent her time in Louisiana working in backyard Bible schools for

little children and visiting senior adults in a nursing home.

“We ran the gamut from little-bitties to the elderly,” she said. “Some of them knew about God, and some of them didn’t. But at the end of each VBS, they did like a little performance of what they learned. You could hear God moving through those children. You could hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, and it was just so moving to see how the kids had grown.”

Brown closed the chapel service with an invitation to students to participate in mission trips during fall and spring breaks as well as the summer months.

“God uses those mission opportunities to change people’s lives,” Brown said. “But also, your life is changed for participating.

“Our hope is that after you experience one of these trips—you go, and you serve—that you come back ready to serve right where you are and that the lessons that you’ve learned on the mission field become lessons that you can use right here on our campus. We would love to take a large group of students back to Alaska and to these other places.”