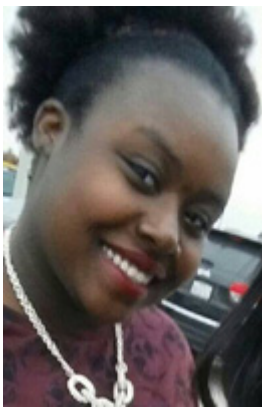


# Rio Grande Valley: Smiles transcend language barriers

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Since I live in the Dallas area, it definitely was culture shock at first when our 14-member team arrived in the Rio Grande Valley, along the Texas/Mexico border. But within a few days, it felt similar to home.



Seyi Akinwale We served in several Vacation Bible Schools throughout the area that needed extra help. We provided assistance through worship, snacks, crafts, sports and stories. All together, we worked in seven Vacation Bible Schools.

The first two weeks, our team split in half and hosted different Vacation Bible Schools in the area. The first church we hosted was in Peñitas. Most of the children were bilingual but preferred to speak Spanish. The younger ones, age 3 and below, didn't speak English at all. At first, the team thought it was a barrier because we only had a few fluent Spanish speakers per team. Then we saw the smiles on the kids' faces during our worship rally.

No matter what language the songs were sung in, we all worshiped God through one language, which was love. In the end, we realized all we truly needed was a smile. A smile is practically universal and means virtually the

same thing throughout every culture.

One of the highlights had to be the very last day of VBS in Harlingen. My partner and I teamed up and were in charge of mission stories. We asked two or three children to participate in our simulation where they would be the missionaries and the other kids would ask them questions. As we were wrapping up, we got the topic of accepting Jesus into one's heart.

One child who is about 11, who answered all our questions throughout the week, had never heard of accepting Jesus. I pulled him to the side and explained to him, and he seemed very interested. Eventually I asked him if he wanted to accept Jesus into his heart and he agreed. We went outside and used the ABC model to pray—admit, believe and confess.

That was an amazing experience because it's important to realize that even though someone might understand Bible knowledge, it doesn't necessarily mean they have truly accepted Jesus. I felt extremely blessed to be part of the Valley Summer Project this summer.

*Seyi Akinwale, a student at Collin College, served on an Impact Team with Go Now Missions in the Rio Grande Valley.*