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You better BELIZE that I had a great time: journeyintotheworld.wordpress.com

Belize. It’s an UNBELIZEABLE place! It is much more than a Central American country which exports sugarcane and a Caribbean tourist location along beachside. It is a place full of people who are genuinely happy even if they do not have all the luxuries in the world. It is a place full of people who are welcoming and friendly even if they do not have much to offer. I went on this medical mission trip through NCSU to Belize for ten days without knowing what to expect other than I would be eating rice and beans for almost every meal and I needed to know a lot of Spanish.

When we arrived in Belize, we were greeted by the wonderful staff members who continued to show us great hospitality throughout the rest of the week. The place we stayed was right on the beach front and the ocean was just beautiful. We spent the rest of the first day just getting situated, learning about the history of Belize and getting to better know the ISL staff members. The next day we met with the local doctor who was going to accompany us on our journey through the week and he gave us orientation of what was to be expected of us in the home visits and community clinics. There was a lot to be learned in that one day but we were all there for one reason and that was to provide healthcare to the people that didn’t have access to it and hopefully make even a small difference in a person’s life. We split ourselves into two groups so we could visit more communities during our stay in Belize.

During the home visits, we went to individual houses calling out to the people saying, “Hi, we are a group of volunteers. Is anyone in your family sick or in need of seeing a doctor? We are hosting a free clinic tomorrow.” That was just the start of the conversations we had with some of the people there. I remember talking to one man for about twenty minutes about his life in general and what he wanted out of life before he started asking me about what I wanted to do in the future. Those types of conversations just made you realize how lucky and fortunate we were.

During the community clinics, we saw all of the patients plus some walk-ins and basically got to play “doctor”. We diagnosed the patient to the best of our abilities before going to the doctor and learning more from him. It was a wonderful learning experience in general. The people that we talked to during the house visits were so welcoming and brought us into their homes even if it was a small hut with no air conditioning or seats. Their happiness radiated in all directions and I made a new friend. We still keep in touch over Facebook while we are miles apart. After the clinics and home visits, we got to take a 2 day vacation to see the Mayan Ruins and visit Caye Calker to go snorkeling in one of the world’s most famous living coral reefs.

One of the things I enjoyed the most was not the beauty of the Mayan Ruins or the coral reef, but it was the time that I got to spend with the little children. We got to go visit the community schools and talk to the children about healthcare. Everyone there called me the “child whisperer” because anywhere we went; there was a little one with me. It is surprising to say, but the little children taught me a lot about myself. This trip gave me a self-realization moment about what it was that I wanted to do with my future and I could not have been any prouder of myself of the work that I had done and for all the lives that I had touched in the process.

Words are not enough to describe how amazing this program was and how lucky I was to be able to experience everything. Belize it or not, if I could, I would return to Belize to do more medical mission work every year for a few weeks!