



No Skills? No Problem!

Sometimes people tell us, I'm just not good at _____ (fill in the blank). Well, that is just not an issue for us at SHIP. God gives all of us something we can do to bring glory to Him. And at SHIP, we can find a place for you to use that gift!

It's been a busy summer at SHIP. We've taken four groups to our *segunda casa*, our second home. And we have introduced the more than 70 who have gone with us to visit our *familia*—the children and adults in our neighborhood and the children in the orphanage. On the following pages, you will read the stories of some the SHIP trippers—people who commit to going to El Salvador, spending a week, and pouring their hearts and souls into improving the lives of people they have never met.



You'll read stories from high school and college kids and moms, from couples and grandparents. From business men and women and from a police officer



theme of each story is, "I came to change lives, but my life is the one that was changed."

And as much as the lives of SHIP trippers are changed, you can be very sure that THEY change the lives of the people they have an opportunity to impact. SHIP trippers are the hands and feet of Jesus; they leave no doubt as to Whom they serve and why they serve. The smiles of the children they taught in Bible school, the grateful



and a coach, from retirees and young professionals. (Occasionally, we get a skilled contractor or electrician!) They come from different backgrounds, walks of life, states, and churches. And the common

tears of those who received a new home or roof, the handmade thank-you notes and cards, will forever remind all of us that we were the answer to someone's prayer in the little neighborhood where SHIP serves.



"Who goes on SHIP trips?" we are often asked. Anyone. Anyone who has a heart to give, a mind to work, and genuine desire to share the love of Jesus. Level of skill, age, ability (or lack thereof) to speak Spanish, SHIP can use the gifts that God has blessed you with. We hope you'll be inspired by these stories and that you will give serious consideration to joining us soon.

Save the Date!
SHIP Fundraiser
Phillips Event Center @ Briarcrest
Bryan, Texas
Tuesday, October 20, 11:30 a.m.

A Heart for Jesus

by Lori Vesperman, Texas

We knew little about SHIP, and less about El Salvador, when we were asked



to serve as the parent sponsors for the international service trip (fondly called the "SHIP trip") of KOR Education School's 11th grade leadership class. We were simply excited to be a part of the kids' servant leadership experience. However, during the last year as we prepared for our trip, and especially during our week with SHIP in El Salvador, we saw firsthand the extraordinary work being done in Jesus' name and through His love with the children and families of this small area outside San Salvador.

In a country of contrasts, where piles of garbage intertwine with lush foliage, children skip and laugh along sidewalks patrolled by policemen with assault rifles, and where stark poverty abuts vast wealth, SHIP is bringing the message of Jesus – that His love is for *everyone* regardless of social status, living conditions, education, or opportunity.

In our week with SHIP, we saw this love manifested in a multitude of ways. Children received meals, tutoring, opportunities to serve and work and learn skills. Neighborhood women were given opportunities to work and sell items from the SHIP Shop to help support their families. Families received new houses and safe shelter. Children heard lessons from the Bible – from Jesus and about Jesus. Relationships were built and strengthened between the SHIP staff and the orphanage children and staff, local craftsman, neighborhood families, and community schools. We found ourselves humbled by the magnitude – and yet simplicity – of SHIP's work: have a heart for Jesus, love people, and go where Jesus opens doors.

Our experience impacted us tremendously. While being in El Salvador was certainly an eye-opening look at poverty in the extreme, even more so it was an eye-opening look at ourselves and how quickly we could become spiritually poverty-stricken. We expected to pity the Salvadoran people for their lack of opportunity and convenience, but

instead we took a hard look at ourselves and at how Satan potentially uses our convenience and opportunity to give birth to expectation and entitlement. We were touched by the joy of the Salvadoran people – joy in their relationships and in what they *did* have rather than any sadness over what they didn't have. Finally, we came home with a deeper desire to invest more fully in the eternal. Perhaps that will mean another "SHIP trip," but it may simply mean embracing the simplicity of SHIP's work: have a heart for Jesus, love people, and go where Jesus opens doors.



Unexpected Events

by Janise Crumpler, Louisiana

It's funny how you plan a mission trip with the intention of ministering God's love to others, and you end up on the receiving end of God's love. This trip was a wonderful experience for me – making friends with the staff, getting to know the neighbors, and having fun with the kids.



What I didn't expect was the way God orchestrated events to bring certain ones of us together at the perfect time for His healing work to be done. No one could have planned the way our schedule worked out, where four of us had days of private time with such close fellowship to see His work accomplished. I am still amazed.

I went on this mission trip to El Salvador not knowing a soul, not even my teammates, and wondering a little about my sanity! On the second day there, God's peace washed over me, and I had an awareness that this trip was going to be the beginning of a healing done in my own life. The trip was successful in terms of what I was able to accomplish for the team, but the unbelievable series of events that occurred to accomplish God's plan was the real success.

Insights from KOR Students

by KOR Education School (College Station, Texas) students; 11th grade leadership class end-of-year international service trip

I found my interactions with the kids, specifically a disabled boy named Manuel, to be the most memorable thing I did in El Salvador. He has muscular dystrophy. Working up the courage to talk to him was hard. Finally, I made myself sit down with him. I listened as he showed me his Spanish/English coloring book and read the English words aloud to me. I listened with intrigue and affirmed his correct pronunciations of words that seem so simple to me. Despite his physical handicap, he was a kid just like I was. I'm not sure how he felt about our 20-minute broken "Spanglish" chat at the time, but if the look that lit up his face the next time I saw him and waved in greeting is any indication, I think he felt that we were friends. It amazes me how two teenage boys who have almost nothing in common, come from different cultural backgrounds, speak different languages, and have different physical attributes can overcome all of those variables and make a connection.
– Tyler Vesperman

As I interacted with the children in El Salvador, I caught a glimpse of their personalities and was surprised by their happiness. My initial [cultural] shock morphed into compassion as I saw the reality of their day-to-day lives. Most of the neighborhood children live in pieced together homes with no running water or electricity and are grateful to have a roof over their heads. They are untouched by the world outside of El Salvador and content with what little they have.
– Catherine Sexton

I could have easily been born into a life where I didn't have many choices or opportunities. As I visited with some children at SHIP's facility, I began to take a special interest in one boy. He was my age, had a similar personality, shared the same interests as I do, and yet there was still one unfathomable difference: he would never have the opportunity that I do...I've always thought of college as another step on the ladder that is life, but I realize now more than ever, that college is a blessing, a challenge, and more, an opportunity. – Alexander Richter

Serving as a Family

by Diana Armstrong, Texas

An egg cracks on your head and then you're covered in confetti. It's a celebration and a new beginning all at one time. Welcome to SHIP's neighborhood in El Salvador!

What started as an idea for a fun summer trip for the Armstrong family ended up being a memorable and maturing experience for my children and me. I watched my 15-year-old son, Matthew, pray for a group of 30



people during a morning devotion. He rose early each day, by choice, to have a time of Bible study and prayer, and willingly painted and worked on houses. He even used his newly acquired talent of juggling to share the Gospel with a campus full of elementary children.

My 13-year-old daughter, Michaela, learned to communicate God's truths and make friends with children who spoke a language other than her own. She got to share God's truths with neighborhood children of all ages, and she learned that poverty can be relative – that it actually has little to do with true happiness or contentment.

I especially enjoyed our visit to an open air, local congregation on the Lord's Day. En route, the streets were filled with pedestrians headed to worship services, some walking to church while others waited in lines in a local park for a ride from the passing cars. Language was no hindrance to Christian fellowship.

I marveled at the freedom that we had to share a Gospel presentation in a public school and the provision of God to assemble a team with just the right

mix of gifts and talents to get a week's worth of ministry done successfully.

If you would like some quality time with your family and the Lord, I recommend taking a SHIP trip with your family soon!



Veronica

by Gloria Matthews, Texas

Her name is Veronica, and she lives in El Salvador. She is 31 years old. She has three darling little boys. Veronica has brain cancer.



Veronica and her family – her mother, father, grandmother, and grandfather – live down the road from the SHIP facility. SHIP teams were repairing or rebuilding their homes. While there, I helped with work on the grandparent's roof, and I interacted with Veronica's three little boys that morning at their house. It wasn't hard for a grandmother like me, being used to mobilizing grandchildren, to get the little boys involved moving the broken canes and tiles. They were so precious!

Veronica was not home. She was in the hospital in the city. As I write these words, I do not know if she is still alive or if she has gone to be with our Lord.

What I do know – Veronica and her family touched my heart and my life. The evening before our team left El Salvador, we loaded up in the SHIP van and bumped down the "road" to the family's homes.

After taking pictures of the team with all of the family, we formed a circle, held hands and Robert Horton prayed. He prayed for Veronica; when amen was said, Veronica's mother, who was standing to my left and holding my hand, turned and fell into my arms sobbing. I sobbed. Everyone there felt the family's pain.

Being a mother, with a daughter a few years older than Veronica, my understanding of her pain was overwhelming. I imagined how I would feel if my child was dying from brain cancer and was miles away from me in a hospital, and I was unable to get there to stay with her...all the while knowing she could die alone. There was overwhelming grief and sense of loss.

Veronica – I didn't get to meet her; she did not know me or even of my existence; but her story has touched my life. I continue to pray for her family, especially her three little boys.

Life-changing experiences. You never know what God has in store for you. We must just trust and obey. SHIP trips change lives.



Learning Contentment

by Beth LaFever, Oklahoma

Since 2004, I've heard stories about SHIP's work in El Salvador and about the blessings God has given on this mission field, but this was my first time to go there.



The children's smiles were heartwarming. They loved on all of us when we arrived, and it was such a joy to see those I've heard about and prayed for the past 11 years.

While there, I worked on the construction job site. Seeing firsthand how other people in the world live and are content makes me ashamed for the times I've thought I had it so rough. We built a new house for a woman, whose daughter has a brain tumor, and she was so happy for her new home. We also replaced a roof for the woman next door. It was hard work, but to see the smiles on their faces made it so worthwhile. After work each day, we spent time with the kids, which was always a treat. I look forward to seeing what God has in store for SHIP!



Eternal Impacts

by Terry Hoelscher, Texas

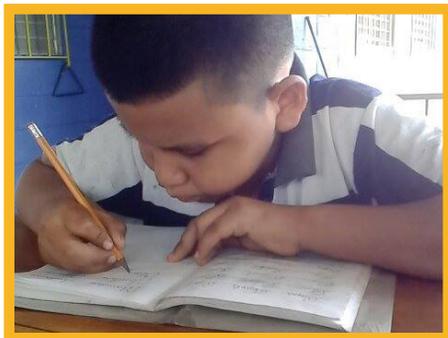


My wife and I just returned from a week in El Salvador and want to share our experience. We were struck immediately by the strong bond of love between the SHIP staff and the locals.

This ministry is not just about a feel-good week here and there but about impacting the lives of the local people for long term and for eternity. Women are learning essential skills to be able to provide for themselves through entrepreneurial mentorship, training, and business opportunities. Orphans and local neighborhood children are being given access to an education. Local families are having homes built for them, and their tears of gratitude will not soon be forgotten by anyone. Local men are being provided with long-term employment, and their zeal for the Lord is evident.

Most importantly, the gospel of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ is being proclaimed at every turn. God is being glorified at VBS, evening devotions, neighborhood outreaches, and even in the classrooms of the public schools.

We feel like our worldview has been impacted forever, are yearning to return, and highly recommend a trip with SHIP to anyone. The trips are well organized, the food is good, and the fellowship is great. The element of danger, while real, is offset by common sense protocols and the realization that God is in control and on His throne. (Psalm 93:1-2)



Remembering Blessings

by Scott Jones, Texas

My wife Shannon and I spent a week away from our three young boys, serving the Lord together this summer in El Salvador. It was an eye-opening time for both of us, but it especially hit home with me. Living in the United States allows so much freedom, but how quickly we forget our blessings. Quality food, shelter, clothing, and all the desired amenities are at our fingertips.

I was able to see "shelter" firsthand and be a part of building and repairing what became homes. I was convicted as I thought of my closet of clothing that I rarely wear, while the people I served had one or two outfits. I take for granted the abundance of quality food that I have in my pantry and refrigerator, as I often stand with doors open and proclaim, "We have nothing to eat." I realized that I have become comfortable in my Christianity and forget how blessed I am to live in the USA. I was reminded of how little I actually need in order to have joy as I saw God's children experience "new" clothing, a building that would become a home, or just a hug from a person who cares about them. I am blessed to be a part of an organization that cares about God's children – each of them – and yearns for their hearts. "... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40



Leave No One Behind

by Adam Laubach, Texas

"Christ-centered excellence in serving our brothers and sisters in El Salvador" best summarizes what SHIP

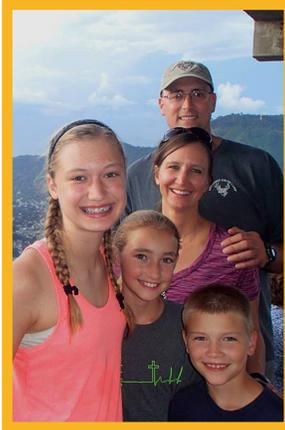
is up to in country. The current service activities of orphan care, neighborhood outreach (VBS, Bible studies, worship services, and tutoring), neighborhood development (building and repairing homes) and business as missions (SHIP Shop and a coffee plantation) offer ways for short-term missionaries of almost any background and age to "plug in" and use their God-given talents to serve those who Jesus cares about most. All of the efforts are done with respect for those being served (as brothers and sisters in Christ) and with a keen eye on long-term commitment to the area and discipleship in His word and ways. We so appreciate the Hortons' hearts to help ensure that when He returns, there will be no one left on their mountain! We recommend a SHIP trip for anyone (especially first or second-time missionaries) who are seeking to have their eyes opened to the possibilities that God has for engaging them in service to others.



A Labor of Love

by Mike Thornton, Texas

I, my wife Kim, and our three kids, Hailey (14), Allison (12), and Ryan (8) made the commitment through prayer and seeking God's will, to join the SHIP team on a trip to El Salvador.



I went to provide "blessings" to the Salvadoran people as a God-believing, North American Christian. However, through the relationships developed and the people with whom we interacted, I'm convinced that we experienced many more blessings than we provided. From the children at the orphanage, the students and teachers at the public school we visited, and the people we interacted with from the local community on the mountain, we learned that faith is sometimes just the mere act of getting up every morning and believing in the sovereignty of God. What a testimony of the grace, favor, and provision of our heavenly Father.

The relationships that exist between SHIP and the local community provided many opportunities for us to express our love for Christ and to share the Gospel in both words and works. The labor of love that took place was humbling. From building a new home, building a new roof, vacation Bible school, men's and women's Bible small groups and even the interactions with our fellow believers participating on the trip, God's sovereign hand was evident. It was beautiful



getting to fellowship with my brothers and sisters in Christ from El Salvador and practice for the day we will all worship together at the feet of our Savior.

Serving for the Kingdom

by Wesley Shaffer, Oklahoma

There is something special about a group of people willing to pour themselves out for the benefit of the Kingdom of God. The experience of the week I spent in El Salvador was more than a good feeling. It was seeing God use many different people to fulfill His will, to spend countless hours building houses and buildings in the heat without a single thing to gain. The only thing we gained was to watch poor and very needy people begin to understand God's love, one small step at a time. The reward was greater than I could have imagined because it was not for me or any of other workers. It was for the benefit of the Kingdom of God. I thank God that He opened the door for SHIP to do what they do.



Sharing Our Lives

by K.C. Mann, Texas



I was part of a mission team this past May. I saw first-hand that the SHIP

ministry is sharing God's love with the Salvadoran people and changing their lives, not just by meeting their physical needs but also by sowing God's word into their hearts.

There have been an abundance of teachings on the body of Christ. On the trip, I saw this concept more fully illustrated than ever before. Our team members were from divergent backgrounds and denominations, ranging in age from 14 to 60+ years old. Our vocational backgrounds were equally as diverse. However, I watched all of these very different people come together to share Christ's love with the Salvadoran people. We built shelter, we fed, we taught Bible school, we loved on people, we worshipped – we shared our lives. And we had fun. SHIP's leadership team led and taught us in all of these areas with humility and grace, and they brought out each team member's unique talents.

The Perfect Mission Trip

by Suzy Childers, Texas

Since returning from El Salvador, I find myself describing the week as "the perfect mission trip." To me, that means that I'm able to share my God-given talents with others. Add to that a wonderful, supportive team bonded by a shared love for God and His children. That's what I call perfect.



As soon as I arrived, I could see SHIP's impact. The children in the orphanage and community are loving and open. They take care of one another. They encourage each other. It's no coincidence that they are treated with love and respect by SHIP trippers and staff. Through tutoring services and attending schools that nurture their talents, kids turn into young adults who learn to give back by contributing their own God-given talents and abilities to their community.

One way we showed God's love and encouragement is through a beautiful quinceañera held to celebrate the 15th birthday of 10 girls who were from the community or orphanage. We had a fun "pre-party" with the girls, complete with a self-portrait paint party, before the girls were pampered with pedicures. We spent the day of the party decorating and primping hair and makeup fit for princesses. The result was a beautiful evening where the girls made a commitment to God, surrounded by their families.

The perfect mission trip filled with love and encouragement for God's people. That's how I describe my SHIP trip!



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James 1:27 *"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."*

Come to El Salvador – September Mission Trip Planned!

A third building is being constructed on SHIP's property in El Salvador, and we're working toward getting into it as soon as possible to further SHIP's outreach efforts in the neighborhood.

We're offering a no frills, work-intensive construction trip September 17-26 or September 20-26 and **looking for help from plumbers, electricians, painters, and people who can fetch and tote.**

Again, no skills, no problem! But, if you know of someone with skills in these areas (or any construction-type areas), or if you would like to come, we need the help.

The cost for this particular trip is \$350 plus the cost of your airfare. As of early August, airfare from Houston IAH to San Salvador is running less than \$400 – a great price that won't last long. Come with us!

