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Baugh: 'I now understand how blessed we are'

Sarah Ryther 02.AUG.07

BOUNTIFUL —“We have it so easy here in the States,” said Madison Baugh. “You will never know how easy you have it until you go to a third-world country!” Baugh and her father recently returned from Peru where they spent two weeks volunteering for YouthLinc. While in Peru, they spent most of their time building a school for the local children and helping in any way needed.



ENVELOPED IN LOVE: Madison Baugh (center) is surrounded by the children she helped while volunteering in Peru.

While the daddy-daughter duo brought much to the people of Peru, Baugh says that helping the Peruvians has drastically changed her life, and not just because she held an anaconda, saw pink dolphins and enjoyed Coca-Cola made with real sugar instead of the fructose-laden Coke we drink here.

“This was the most humbling and amazing experience of my life,” Baugh said. “I now understand how blessed we are.”

“I will never take for granted my home,” she said. “In Belen and in Santa Rosa people literally live in little one-room shacks on stilts. Their roofs are made out of woven banana leaves. Many of them live in abandoned buildings, crooked and broken wood shacks. Any material they can find they will try and make a house from it.”

“In America my house isn’t big, but compared to the houses in Peru, it’s a mansion,” she continued. “I’m so grateful for a sturdy house with air conditioning and appliances”.

Baugh also said that she was amazed and inspired to see how hard everyone, especially the children, worked.

“Kids who are abandoned have to start working for survival, and they have to do anything and everything,” she said. “If you have a family, you still have to do your part in bringing home money. Kids start working as soon as they can walk and talk.”

Baugh says that she thought, “How many kids just stay at home playing video games and watching TV? How many kids get everything they want just by asking for it?”

Baugh also says she’s grateful for health care.

“Hospitals are awful there,” she said. “The doctors and dentists know the bare minimums. And if you are in a village on the Amazon, like Santa Rosa, you might not have a doctor around for miles and miles.”

Baugh says her experience has changed her life, and that she hopes to one day

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do more for impoverished people.

"I want to learn Spanish and get a degree in special education," she said. "One day, I want to go back and start an orphanage for handicapped children. This experience has made me want to do more and more."

"The kids in Santa Rosa are my heroes," she continued. "Their tolerance for pain is 10 times ours. They have so little, but are so happy. I learned that you don't need the latest technology or fashion to have a happy life."

For more information about volunteer opportunities with YouthLinc, visit www.youthlinc.org.

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