

Habitat for Humanity lessons go beyond building houses

By Michelle Filippini



Assistant Business Professor Emily Rhodenbaugh, Senior Lecturer Laura Brunel-Canale and 10 Sierra Nevada College students recently returned from a trip to El Salvador where they helped build a house with Habitat for Humanity.

According to Habitat for Humanity Country Director Patty Cordero, “The leadership of the (SNC) group was exemplary, and the group members did an excellent job working toward their objectives.”

SNC student Todd McAtavey reflected on his experiences in El Salvador. “I’m hoping that we see some real change in the social safety nets with the new FMLN administration.”

McAtavey traveled to Africa last semester and was able to make clear comparisons with what is happening in Africa and in Latin America regarding the inequalities that exist in the developing world.

SNC student Bob Hansen, under the guidance of SNC science Professor Steve Ellsworth, is pursuing research related to deforestation in El Salvador and spent his free time searching for old-growth trees while in the country.

Said Rhodenbaugh, “Bob’s research proved to be valuable to the entire group as we all learned about current environmental concerns in El Salvador, as well as programs that were helping to mitigate these issues.” She went on to say that she

foresees a Spanish, international studies, and even a science component as being useful disciplines for future trips.

SNC students will be completing creative critical thinking pieces based on their El Salvador experiences that will manifest in a variety of public forms across campus next semester.

Anza Jarschke from the Fine Arts Department is looking to point out the absurdity of painting concrete cinder blocks with water-based paint in a interpretive art piece, and Renee Vock and Arielle Shipe are planning to construct photo essays to be hung around campus that will document with photos and words their experience in El Salvador.

The students look forward to sharing their creative pieces with the Sierra Nevada College community.

There will be future opportunities for faculty, students, and community members to participate with SNC's broad-based International Service Learning trips. The college hopes to have another Habitat for Humanity trip opportunity available in December.

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