

Hearts Changed at Skid Row



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What is a ‘new normal’? It is the way you look at life after a life-changing experience. When that experience is a mission trip and you return to your family and friends, you see the world through different eyes. What happens when your heart is broken by the poverty you have seen and you have a desire to help? How do you respond when you have been given the privilege of telling someone about the love of Jesus for the first time? These and other questions are going through the minds and hearts of the IOWAY team of 27 who recently returned from a two week mission trip to the inner city of Los Angeles, CA.

I could not be more proud of the group of dedicated, hard working and fun loving people. What is needed when you put 27 people together for the first time for two weeks and add to that mixture working with people from five different churches, meeting schedules and getting up early? Most needed is flexibility, patience, focusing on why we were there and laughter.

periences of witnessing life in Compton and on Skid Row, initially there was silence, a lot of long faces and tears. The Iowans saw the world through different eyes. They saw the world through the eyes of a man who said, “I don’t want your ‘blank’ Jesus, I want food to eat!” They had sympathy for the pregnant Mom who was homeless along with her six year old daughter. They fought back the tears as a homeless child asked for food but the last of the food we had was given away. They prayed in Spanish with a beautiful woman who asked for prayer and shared that she had lost her job, would soon lose her house and had no idea what she would do next. Their eyes witnessed hundreds of people from infants to the elderly sitting on the sidewalks with nothing to do. They learned that in the area called Skid Row, there is a population of around 8,000 homeless.

Now what? What do we do to help others when God has softened our hearts to the needs of people He loves? One very practical thing



On July 7, the team headed out from Omaha to LAX with apprehension and excitement. Our team divided into groups to work with five Lutheran churches in the Nehemiah project. The first week was spent planning VBS, walking many miles canvassing the neighborhoods around the churches, painting and working numerous hours to make a soft playground area for a Lutheran daycare. Each day, the teams worked hard and had fun sharing the love of Jesus at the VBS at ‘their’ churches. During the second week, the playground work continued along with the painting of a mural on two walls around the playground.

Twice daily we met for devotions and for sharing our POWS and WOWS. What excitement as they could not wait to get together to share the things they experienced that day that were exciting or discouraging! Sometimes we talked for hours.

we are doing is collecting underwear. (Did you smile when you read “underwear”?) It sounds silly until you hear homeless people (young and old) asking, begging for underwear as we handed out clothes. Underwear is not an item usually donated and for good reason! If interested in helping, check out ‘Underwear for Homeless’ under the IOWAY section at www.idwlcms.org

Check out exciting photos, interesting reflections and stories at the IOWAY blog <http://servinggodbyservingothers.blogspot.com>

For a written copy, call Ellie Menz at 515-386-8420.

In closing, a HUGE thank you to all of you who supported our team with prayers and finances. You too were a big part of this mission trip. God bless you and your mission heart.

