

## A Spring Break Tradition Continues to Draw Enthusiastic Teens

By Sarah Henningsen

**D**uring the week of April 1st - 7th, nearly 200 individuals traveled to Tijuana, Mexico for a service trip sponsored by the Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church. This philanthropic retreat has been extremely popular among students from Campolindo and Miramonte High Schools, those both of Christian faith and of no religious affiliations. As in past years, the trip was a highlight for many Lamorinda teenagers and a great community gathering of humanitarianism.

The main purpose of the Mexico trip is to build houses for impoverished families in Tijuana, an area in which a large percentage of the population lives below the poverty line or on the streets altogether. Each participant is assigned to a team of 11-13 members who work throughout the week to construct one house together, each consisting of two rooms. Campolindo junior Jenna Hermansen reflected on the work portion of the Mexico trip: "Not only did I have a blast, but it showed me how lucky and blessed I am to come home to a

safe and welcoming

A couple of high school seniors served as team leaders, responsible for organizing social events prior to the week in Mexico, giving assignments during the construction process and unifying the team as a whole. Senior Kenny Karielian, who has gone to Mexico every spring vacation since his freshman year, commented on his role as a leader of the Blue Team: "I thought the whole thing was an awesome experience. It was great seeing my team work together and watching them interact with the people in Mexico."

From a religious standpoint, the project is not intended to impose Christianity on those

involved and instead focuses upon a community gathering of spirituality and renewal. In contrast to other church retreats that are exclusively restricted to parishioners, this service trip is open to anyone who is curious, willing, and interested in participating.

As evidenced by the extremely positive talk and reminiscing at the high schools, MVPC's philanthropic trip to Mexico was thoroughly enjoyed by dozens of individuals. Junior Susan Brinckerhoff took a lot away from her experiences in Tijuana, expressing that, "The main focus was just bringing hope to the people in Mexico. Even though there was prayer and reflection, at the end of the day, it was all about helping people out and building a sanctuary for them to come home to."



The group made new friends

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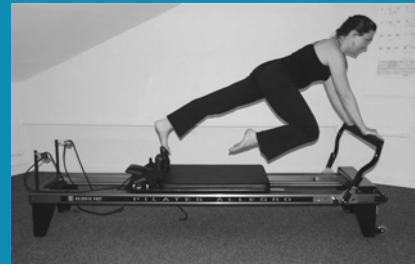
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