Day One

We arrived in Punta Cana at 3:30 .Customs was a problem, our meds and school supplies were fine but now there is a new rule that says you cant bring used clothes into the country. We had removed tags from the new clothes and had everything so nicely organized. After two hours of going through all 16 duffel bags and sorting new and old clothes and lots of prayers they finally let us go with all our supplies. We then arrived at the hotel and picked up a burner phone in case of emergencies. After a couple more long hours, we checked into our rooms. We had a half an hour before we met back up to go to dinner which was very different to experience here. Everything is buffet style and there are a hundred different options to choose from. Next we left the restaurant at the hotel and headed back to Sue's room to start to actually start organizing everything! We filled the closet with school supplies, filled all of the surface room on tables up with clothes sorted by ages (baby, child/teen and then adult). While Sue and the kids were organizing everything, Kim fixed up a beautiful clinic area around the fridge in the room and on the counter above it. It's 11:00, we worked hard and very excited about tomorrow. We will be meeting up for breakfast at 8 am tomorrow and then starting our day in Sabon and then on to the mountain village to see Elvis (the young boy who had surgery last year). Keep us in your prayers while we are on God's journey.

Day2

Today was much better...we had a quick breakfast and then we were off to Wilson's village. There has been a baby boom, luckily we love to hold babies (well most of us..). It was very rewarding to handout supplies (such as toothbrushes and pencils today) and just to see how grateful everyone was. Next we went to see Elvis and found out that he needs more physical therapy and a boot for his club foot. While we were excited to see him walking around and that he had moved into a larger house because of his dad's job change; they struggled to keep up with Elvis' health needs. Then we went on our way to the clinica and found out what medicines they needed. It was amazing to see how their nurse knew everything needed for her community. While we waiting at the clinic, Wilson cut down what was called lemoncella; and you bit into it and peeled until you reached the fruit, then you sucked the juice out of the fruit and threw it on the ground. After the clinica, we saw the school and arranged to meet the children on lunes (Monday). Then we went on to the preschool and everyone was so excited to see us. We gave every child a pencil and tooth brush and shared a Popsicle with them. We had a fun time playing with the parachute that we had brought in January. The roof was falling in which lead us to believe it would be a good use of our money to have it repaired on Monday after we pack up all of the supplies in the school. We made our way back to the hotel fir a quick dinner followed by more sorting of supplies. We are all quite tired but are excited for what tomorrow has to come.

This blog is brought you by Jillian, Joe and Cloe.

Day 3

We woke up this morning when the rooster went off. Joe said he had a new use for one of our boomwackers so we no longer have to worry about being up at 5:00am  . At 9 we were off to Wilson's village an hour away. We had packed the taxi to the max. When we got there we visited the neighborhood an those children that appeared to have little or nothing we invited them back to look through our clothes. That went smoothly until everyone caught on and there were lines everywhere. It s so difficult to give out clothes because you want to give them something they like. It was so nice to see a girl dancing around with her new outfit. We had plenty of tooth brushes to hand out too. Wilson's wife Amarilli made us a dinner of chicken rice and salad and a bottle of coke we were very thankful. After lunch we played some ball and hung out with the kids. We reminded them we would be back Tuesday with school supplies and headed out to the Super Market. We were able to pick up what we needed and most of the prescriptions for the clinic. We all find it difficult ti adjust to" Island Time" they don't seem to mind waiting. After the pharmacy it was a whole sale food distribution center that was a lot cheaper for the food for the families but a long wait because there were so many customers in front of us. We finally had the car packed and headed back to the hotel. We stopped for gas. Did you know they put both a gas and gasoline in their cars.. We got back to the hotel in time for a quick pizza snack and then off to church at 6:15

Church with Elizabeth and Joel was a lot of fun. They seemed to be very impressed with our singing and bell playing. Good thing we had Dakota with us to play along with the guitar. After we played during the service we invited the children to come up and we played with them.  the church There were a lot of wonderful singers At he time seemed to fly by. We were able to give all the kids composition books pens and pencil and a small bad of candy. The message tonight was about how concerned we are about what things cost but God's love is free and the only thing that is everlasting. We had a great time with Davey and Christopher the Pastors kids too.

We were back at the hotel by 10:15 had cold drinks and burgers and fries and we are calling it a night. Tomorrows plans are up in the air.. but we are all looking forward to a little pool an beach time.

Day 4

While we have only been on the island for a few days the impact on not only our hosts lives but our own has been outstanding. Heather's favorite part of the trip so far was handing out the clothes to the kids because she was able to see how much they appreciate them. However at times it was difficult when the children bean to swarm around the clothing bag, none the less the chaos was minute in comparison to the impact we made.

Dakota's favorite part was when there was a child walking on the rocks/glass and then seeing the satisfaction of knowing that we would be able to give him shoes and ultimately better his life.

 Chloe's fondest memory was playing baseball with the children in the streets. Since she plays softball at home she was able to not only show off her skills but run around with the locals. Chloe also loved holding all of the babies and hugging the older kids and being able to give them love.

Olivia's favorite part was going around the village and handing out medicine to the families. While she does not speak much Spanish she felt connected to each individual in the many flocks.

Meredith's favorite moment was meeting the children right before the church service. Though her arm was quite sore during the service from all the arm wrestling beforehand, she really enjoyed the church and lively energy throughout.

Joe wanted to make a note that the generosity of the people transcends their conditions. (A wise man of few words) While there is great amounts of hope and happiness the many stray dogs and kittens seen through every village saddened him.

Not only did Jill love holding all of the babies, she enjoyed loving all of the newborn kittens. She also enjoyed the lively singing and spiritually connecting with all of the churchgoers.

Kim's favorite part has been returning and seeing the increase in small businesses throughout the smaller villages and the improvements made throughout the many years. She also enjoyed seeing all of her old friends and how much they have grown.

Lastly, Sue was overjoyed to see how everybody was happy to have us visit, and how comfortable they were to ask us for help.

Day 5 Hola! Started our day by bring a ton of supplies to the front desk and then we were off to breakfast..imagine riding in a taxi with 3 duffle bags, 8 backpacks and 10 people, and speed bumps every 20 feet. Well we did it all with a smile and went to Wilson's grandmothers village. All of our planning and labeling did not go as well as we intended. There were so many more children who needed more clothes and school supplies. I cannot explain the feeling I give away a supply to a child and see the joy on their faces. Then we made our way to the factory and paid for the building supplies so the new roof on the school could be started. As we waited for Wilson (the taxi driver) to pay we noticed a man who barley had a shirt on because of all of the holes. So we grabbed two shirts and ran across the street to bring them to him. Next we were off to Elvis' house and drank water all the way. We spoke firmly to his father because of his lack of commitment to Elvis' therapy. Elvis got his new boot but we quickly noticed that only one shoe fit so now we are going back tomorrow to see the new boot. After Elvis' house, we went to the Haitian family. Then we realized we didn't bring the right duffel bag but we had enough supplies to fills the needs. We met a young lady named Jenny and she needed medical care because her toe was crushed and destroyed. So we brought her to the clinic down the road, delivered our medical supplies and got her toe fixed. The doctor was thrilled with everything we brought (see picture below). We were so surprised to see all the plastic containers that held supplies we brought them last year and that they were all basically gone. She was in desperate need of surgical instruments and could not find them in Higuay (the city) so we are going to try to buy them and have them shipped to her. Next we went to the school and this time Meredith was able to get all the children to sit in a line so we could easily distribute supplies. Jillian and Joe played frisbee with the kids while Heather and Dakota passed out supplies. Chloe took pictures of everything. Kids that had no clothes got new outfits and shoes. Then we were off to the preschool to see the progress of the roof. We were surprised to see how much the 4 men had gotten done in such a short amount of time. We waited for the teacher in one of the neighbor’s houses who had a new batch of puppies and kittens and plenty of kids. The teacher, Linda, arrived and was so excited. Dakota and Heather gave her the new posters for the school while the rest of us blew bubbles with the kids. To end the hot day we went off Macaow, to the most beautiful beach. Wilson brought us snacks while we all went for a refreshing swim. We found a cute little snail and named it after Wilson. We were back at the hotel by6 o'clock, showered and met back up for dinner in a half an hour. And now here we are writing tonight's blog. There will be more packing of supplies and we will be back off tomorrow morning!!

Day 6

 Greetings from the Dominican! We were happy we had smartened up and gave Wilson the already packed bags the day before to leave at his house. This way were had a little more breathing room on the ride over. We then stopped at the car repair shop to pick up the handle which Sue yanked off the prior day. We went on an hour and a half drive to Wilson's house where we thought we were so much more organized. We tried marking their wrists and make a line but little did we know is that they could run home and wash off the marker. While there was a bit of chaos, we did manage to distribute supplies to 132+ children. We had the opportunity to walk around the village and take pictures with the families and the kids holding their new school supplies. Jillian received a beautiful picture from a boy named Samuel, this was very meaningful to her realizing she had made such an impact the other day she had spent there. Olivia and Jillian met another boy who had the Chikungunya disease so they delivered medicine to him. While Jillian and Olivia did that, Chloe, Heather, Joe, Dakota, and Meredith passed out books and had some children attempt to read the books to them. After Wilson's village, we went zip lining at a friend of Wilson's at Adventure Park. Great fun was had by all. We were able to go 4 times each and had the opportunity to taste freshly ground chocolate from a Cacao fruit. After zip-lining, we went to Elvis' house to see the boot that finally fit!!! Hooray! It was a wonderful sight to see him walking down the road with a smile on his face. After Elvis' house, we went to the preschool to see the finished roof and to take a photo with Linda (the teacher) and the Suffield Observer with all of us. After a long day, we are sad to say we are coming home tomorrow but happy to say that we helped so many people. We ended the night by going to a Japanese restaurant and experienced fried ice cream! And here we are writing the blog!! See you all tomorrow! :(