Continuing our series of articles from our young people traveling to Guatemala on Mission, here is an article by Sophie Rogers:

Short Term Missions: Are They Worth the Cost?

While preparing for our mission to Guatemala, our group has spent a lot of time discussing the common criticisms that are given to short-term missions. The groups that go on short-term mission trips often do what they feel is best instead of consulting with the community to learn their needs and how the money they bring can make the biggest positive changes. Short-term missions often have large budgets that are used to fix problems that could be handled in a cheaper way by the locals who need work. Not working with the locals also encourages the idea that the native people in third world countries are incapable of doing things and that the job can be done better by people from North America. So how does a group have a successful short-term mission? The key is communication. The group needs to focus on learning rather than doing. This does not discourage the actions and deeds done during short-term missions, but it makes them more meaningful. Instead of doing the projects themselves, the missionaries should spend time with the locals to learn about their lives and what really affects their communities. When focusing on what the missionaries can be taught, both sides can benefit equally. This also allows the short-term mission to continue even after the group returns. By establishing a dialogue and understanding the people’s lives, the group and their fellow parishioners can support organizations and projects that will result in long-term solutions and change the mind of people who believe that short-term missions discourage progress.