

Trip of a Lifetime

By Matt Royster

You have probably heard about the mission trips to Venezuela sponsored by the UCC's Global Partners, but you haven't participated. Why not? That described me until last year. My name is Matt Royster and I live in Denver. I had struggled with the time commitment and dollars needed to go, and with increasing my carbon footprint as my mission in life is to inspire folks to take better care of the Earth!

Fortunately, in one of my occasional moments of wisdom, I decided to go. With the support of my wife Sandy, and the support of three of our UCC churches collecting donations to take, I was set. One church's mission committee helped pay for a portion the trip. I could tell that many of the donors were with me in spirit! Other Global Partner leaders did a great job helping us prepare for the trip. Participants got to know each other and the leaders were very clear on what to expect. All of that preparation made me feel very comfortable to go. So last April ten of your brothers and sisters from around Colorado left DIA bound for Maracaibo, Venezuela. The journey had begun!

We were greeted by wonderful folks who made us feel very welcome. Part of the reason I decided to go was because I felt this need to know more of God's children around the world. It was one of the most profound experiences of my life. We were immediately taken under their wing and treated like family. To experience how others live, even for a short time, was amazing. It was clear that family and relationship with God were at the top of their priority list.

We spent five days miles away from Maracaibo in a small village

called Ospino. There we stayed at a hostel built in 1840. We worked on a project that created a community of landowners who had been squatters on the same land. Pastors from other towns came to work with us. We worshiped each evening with the all the folks we had spent the day working beside, along with folks from the community. The Holy Spirit was very present and the music was incredible!

The family that fed us every meal for almost five days of the nine-day trip had 11 kids, seven adopted right off the street. Living in a masonry home of about 750 square feet (no basement), they gave up their family room to makeshift tables and fed us very well. Remembering the generosity of this family still causes me to tear up. There were so many acts of generosity and loving kindness that continue to touch my heart, even today. Please consider



joining a mission trip to Venezuela. I'm so glad I decided to go. It is a great opportunity to get to know more of God's children. May God bless you on your journey.

This year's mission trips are: Youth Trip- July 21-28; trip in October- dates to be determined, Hopefully a few of our Venezuelan friends will be here in June to participate in a workshop at Iliff (some church visits available). For more info please contact Alice Silver at 720-344-6947. Thanks!

Matt Royster can give a presentation (with slides) on his mission trip to Venezuela to your church. Also, Matt is developing a non-profit named One Voice for the Earth. His mission is to give presentations to inspire individuals to take better care of God's creation. Also, he can provide music and words for worship. Please contact Matt at OneVoicefortheEarth.org

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