

ETBU softball team shows Christ's love in Costa Rica

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SAN JOSE, Costa Rica—Several never had participated in a mission trip or traveled outside the United States. A few never had flown on an airplane. But members of the East Texas Baptist University softball team overcame fear of the unknown to show Christ's love in Costa Rica.

"You could see something changing in them throughout the week as they learned so much," ETBU Softball Coach Janae' Shirley said. "You could see they were starting to recognize and see God in everything that they were doing and the different places they served."



The ETBU softball team and the Costa Rican national team pray together after their exhibition games. During the Dec. 10-17 mission trip, team members distributed Bibles, worked on construction, served at a school and home for children, and played two exhibition games against the Costa Rican national team.

"For my teammates and me, this mission trip was a huge step out of our comfort zone," senior Kaitlyn Hollingshead said.

While in Costa Rica, the Youth with a Mission San Jose location served as

the softball team's base of operations. YWAM provided the students support through translators, Bible study, lodging, meals and worship experiences.

"It was a moving worship time full of songs in Spanish and English, but regardless of the language, voice and hands were held high, worshipping the one and only Savior," junior Katelyn Cooper said. "It was an amazing time getting to talk and pray with the workers on the base from all over the world."

Shirley noted one YWAM guide explained how sports can open doors to share the gospel that sometimes otherwise are closed in Costa Rica.



With Uno cards ready, ETBU senior Trina Deyo and sophomore Alexis Nixon have fun with elementary students in Costa Rica. "My faith was encouraged to hear these young ladies share the message of God's love through Jesus to Costa Ricans on their doorsteps, on the sidewalks and in their living rooms," said ETBU President Blair Blackburn.

"Challenged to overcome the language barrier, our students used their Spanish scripts to guide their introduction, discuss the power of God's

word, deliver the Bible as a gift and offer to pray for families they met along the way.”

Jayne Perez, who never had been outside the United States, insisted the experience in Costa Rica changed her view of the world.

“It made me realize how blessed that I am to have grown up in a Christian environment and attend a Christian university, like ETBU,” she said, noting she was shocked people didn’t have access to Bibles and were grateful to receive one.

“We know that God’s word is a powerful tool, and we are so excited to have a small part of sharing it with the people in Costa Rica,” said Scott Bryant, ETBU vice president for spiritual development. “We prayed over every Bible that was given out, and we know that God’s word does not return void.”

After playing the Costa Rican national team in softball, helping at an orphanage and being immersed in a new culture, the team left Costa Rica “with changed hearts, a deeper passion for the Lord, and stronger relationships as a team,” Hollingshead said.

In May, the ETBU men’s soccer team plans to travel to Nicaragua. Next December, the Tiger bass fishing team and ETBU baseball team will participate in foreign missions.