

## NICARAGUAN PLIGHT DRIVEN HOME



Above: Members of a Mission of Hope trip and several of the Nicaraguans they've helped by building a new 8' x 10' home.

The images were difficult to see, the message difficult to hear and the reality, even more unbearable. Yet, the people of Nicaragua, especially the children do bear it, because they have no choice.

Sister Debbie Blow, one of the founders of North Country Mission of Hope, a multi-denominational humanitarian organization working in Nicaragua, spent a day with the Academy describing in depth the horrible conditions of the children and families living in Nicaragua and the harsh realities of their lives.

Standing very close to audience members and looking them in the eye she asked, "What did you and I do to get to live the way we do, and what did they ever do to have to live the way they do?"

Slowly, an accompanying slide show graphically conveyed the lives of children picking through dump refuse for scraps to eat, at times fighting with four-foot-tall turkey buzzards; the cancer and other medical conditions and early deaths that result from the filthy conditions in which they live; the polluted water; houses made of trash bags; and lack of education.

As she walked through her personal stories of the atrocities she has witnessed firsthand, the audience of high school young women sat

unusually still and quiet, some wiping tears from their eyes. Certainly they were asking themselves the same question and, probably trying very hard to justify the answer that only fate had given them their prosperous lives.

But Sister Debbie had not come to distribute guilt, rather she repeatedly stated, that her mission that day was to show them how much they had and to help them be grateful for all that they had. She also wanted them to know that every one of them could make a difference in the world. She frequently mentioned one of their classmates, Siobhan Norton (see story page 9) who had participated in a mission trip to Nicaragua and was planning to return during February vacation this year.

Sister Debbie's intention also was to spread the concept of hope. Hope, she explained, was in the heart of each of the children her organization was able to help through its clinics, orphanages, schools and meals programs.

As they filed slowly from the chapel back to classes, there was none of their usual cheerful banter, only quiet young women carefully reflecting on Sister Debbie's solemn message.

To learn more about Mission of Hope and how you can become involved, please go to [www.ncmissionofhope.org](http://www.ncmissionofhope.org).