

## MISSION TRIP TO NICARAGUA HELPS SENIOR MATURE

BY SIOBHAN NORTON, CLASS OF 2010

"It'll be good for you," I vaguely heard my mom say as I protested in the back seat. With my arms folded tightly in front of me, the car made its way to the airport. I had planned to visit Ireland, but now I found myself heading to Nicaragua on a mission trip.

When I finally arrived just outside Managua, it was midnight. After leaving the airport, the ghastly odor and the rickety bus that brought us to our lodging took me aback. Although I love the Spanish language, the difference in the culture was such a sharp contrast.

I was overwhelmed and still longed for Ireland. In Nicaragua, I missed American comforts like drinking clean water and hearing my native

was used for bathing, washing clothes, going to the bathroom, and even drinking! Needless to say, the stench made me sick to my stomach, but the reality of how these children lived compelled me to help them during my last three days. When we returned to our quarters, I immediately registered to sponsor a child from the village. Once back in the U.S., I planned to send money for this child to attend school, obtain books, and have three meals a day. I was thrilled to be able to help once I got home.

When my parents met me at the airport, they looked worried, thinking they had made a mistake in sending me to Nicaragua. Instead, they found a happy, smiling teenager. Before this trip, I was the stereotypical American girl who played sports, shopped at the mall, and most importantly, followed the crowd. Life was rough, I thought, when I wasn't allowed out with my friends. Since my trip, I realized how much I had matured.

This summer, while my friends were at the beach, I earned money to send to my sponsored child. Not only did I set aside enough to support a little girl at school, but I also managed to save additional funds to pay to have a new house built near Managua for her family. It is comforting to know that they will no longer live at the dump.

The best news is that I have been accepted to



language. It didn't take long, though, for me to forget about these everyday conveniences. For example, I thought a cold bucket shower was painful, but the Nicaraguan villagers were lucky if they had a bucket shower even once a week. In fact, who was I to complain when this community spent every day just trying to survive? I started to realize that I took a lot for granted and began to focus on the days ahead.

From 6 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., I built home shelters, served food to impoverished families, assisted in health clinics, and visited children in the orphanage. Five days into the trip, the mission leader asked a small group of us to go to La Cheraca ("Children of the Dump"). In America, most people call a dump a landfill; in Managua, they call it home. When the children should have been in school, I saw them playing in the garbage, as vultures flew overhead and cows roamed freely. The watering hole to 1,200 people



participate in another mission trip to Nicaragua. As I prepare to travel during the week of February vacation, I am looking forward to building the new home of my sponsored child, Maryjune, and to making a difference in the lives of the gracious and grateful people of Nicaragua.

Above: La Cheraca, where families live and children play.

Below: Siobhan Norton, Class of 2010, shares a happy moment with a student in Managua, Nicaragua, where she participated in a mission trip last year.