



**I'm home!** I wanted to thank you for helping by donating our team shirts

that we wore on one of the best experiences of my life! While in Haiti, we did Vacation Bible School in the orphanage and for the local village people. However, we were mostly there just to show the kids that people loved them. When our bus arrived at the orphanage the kids swarmed us. Most of the time we had more than one child just wanting to touch us. In the orphanage there is a "momma" that is responsible for taking care of about 20 kids each. All the "momma" is required to do is make sure the kids are dressed and to clean their one plate they get to eat off. They do not get taught manners or discipline. Most of all they are never shown that anyone really loves them, until a group comes from our church. Most of the children get attached to you after the first day and wouldn't let any of the other kids get close to you. I fell in love with a four year old boy named Etsel. (He's in my lap in the top picture.) Actually, I fell in love with all of the children, but he's my favorite! Many of the parents in the village believe it is better off for their kids to be in the orphanage because they are fed, get free schooling, and have a place to sleep. But after spending time with the village kids as well as the orphanage kids, I know it is better off to be raised by family, even if things are hard and not perfect. Even though most of the village kids had only one pair of shoes, one outfit, and a little concrete house or stick house to live in, they had parents who taught them things and most of all showed them love.

There was a huge fence that separated our guest house from the village. The village kids flocked to the fence each day. I lived at the fence. All the "fence" kids became my best friends. Even though I had no idea what they were saying, because they spoke Haitian Creole, we laughed and played around with each other. At first, I felt bad for them because the poverty they were living in. But I noticed they were happy and they didn't know anything else. They played soccer, made fun of me and each other, swam in the rocky shored ocean, and had fun, just like any other American kid. They were just poor and had nothing, but I realized other than that, they were just like me. One day they met our group and went with us to the beach, and showed us this cool sunken WW2 submarine. The one rule we had was to not give the fence people anything because they would always expect groups from America to give them things. I think by the end of the trip we had all broken that rule. All the food I had left, my extra pair of shoes, soap, supplies and band aids, I had given to my new friends. They loved it and they were most excited about the band aids that we had to show them how to even open. I learned to love them, only after a week.

This trip made me so thankful for so many things. I am thankful for water in my house and that I don't have to carry it from a well miles away on my head, electricity to keep me cool at night and lights to see by, paved roads and a car to drive instead mule or old motorcycle, not having to worry about what to eat for dinner (and by the way I ate Goat for dinner one night and it wasn't that bad!). But the most important thing I realized as I held the kids each day, is that we all take for granted having people around us to love and care for us. Just plain ole love is what these children need more than anything else. I can do that. I am already looking for the next trip I can take. I want to work out in the village, maybe on a medical trip if they will let me come. I learned that I am so blessed to be loved by so many people. People like you that helped me experience this wonderful trip. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

All my love,

Anna Brown



"We learned that orphans are easier to ignore before you know their names. They are easier to ignore before you see their faces. It is easier to pretend they're not real before you hold them in your arms. But once you do, everything changes." – Radical by David Platt.