



A New Cultural Experience Shared By Nursing Students

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Imagine the ecstasy of the chocolate farm tour they were able to partake.

The group attended a craft session where the students were taught how to make traditional Belize crafts. They attended an event in the community called “The Battle of the Drums”.

The timing of the annual event was perfect to enable the group of nursing students to experience the celebration.

“There were several different groups that challenged each other in a drum off with one winner,” remembers Grove. “We were invited to listen to traditional Garifuna drumming, eat a traditional Garifuna meal, and received drumming lessons.”

Grove gained knowledge on the difference between the U.S. health care system compared to Belize. Health care is much more accessible in the United States.

“In Belize patients do not make appointments for a clinic visit. They

just show up and hope to be seen,” Grove said.

It could happen that the patient is still in line when the clinic closes for the day. If that happens the person has to go back the next day and get in line again.

The medical care is free for residents of Belize but getting access to that care is difficult. There is no refrigeration to keep insulin or other medications that need to be kept cool which is a handicap to treatment.

Vehicles to access health care when needed are rare in Belize. If a person needs to go to the hospital, they take the bus which comes once in the morning to pick people up and once late in the day to drop them off. People have to walk two miles, first of all, just to get to the bus stop and the bus ride costs \$3.00 each way.

If one is lucky enough to have employment in Belize, the hourly rate of pay is about \$3.00 an hour. The bus trip for the day would mean two hours of precious salary.

“I gained many new friends that I am so thankful to have met. I also gained perspective on

material things, stated Grove. “My perspective, before traveling to Belize, was that I don’t have and don’t need much. However, after being where we were, I realize that what I have is a lot.”

“The simple, happy life I thought I was leading is nothing in comparison to the simple life the people of Belize lead in their country.”

“I learned the difference between need and want. I see that I have too many things in my life that I don’t need,” Grove continued.

In the remote villages the students were guided by area agents who assessed what the health needs were.

The nursing students worked side-by-side with the local children of a school. They made desks which the children didn’t realize until later were meant for their use. The children were thrilled to have a desk of their own on which to study.

The majority of the school teachers in Belize are male because teaching is a stable paying job for the head of a household.

Grove believes that the immersion trip experience will enhance her



Vicky Grove, far right, is instructing nursing students at the College of St. Benedict/St. John’s University on proper obstetric procedures. The students work on a manikin during this part of the course work. Grove is a nursing instructor at St. Benedict’s.



Nursing students from the College of St. Benedict/St. John’s University are performing blood sugar and blood pressure checks on people in Belize. The class, led by instructor Vicky Grove, was immersing themselves in another culture as part of their public health studies. The group was in Belize for 17 days.

students public health nursing skills.

“The students who went with me said they grew leaps and bounds not only as a nurse, but also as a person. They all agreed the experience changed them for the better,” Grove stated.

“The young nurses gained a greater awareness of using a holistic approach in caring for individuals. Nursing students learned they really do need to get to know an individual and know what is “normal” for each

individual patient they care for.

“When we were in a remote village, my students saw kids coming to school with no shoes and they hadn’t eaten breakfast. Those same kids also had no lunch because they didn’t have food to bring or couldn’t afford to buy the food offered at school. The children may only get rice for supper when they return home.

“That experience changed how my students and I saw the world and

ourselves. It is normal for the villages in that area to have no electricity or inside bathrooms,” continued Grove.

As this class of nurses begins their careers in the medical field, they will carry the experiences that they shared in Belize with them.

The attention that the young nurses give to their future patients will reflect what they learned in Belize. They may be better equipped to give individualized care to each patient.



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