

A Mission to the Mountains

May 05, 2010 12:30 PM

Alicia Duplessis Jasmin aduples@tulane.edu

In the second of two spring trips this year to the northwestern corner of Honduras, students involved in Mission Honduras will be putting the finishing touches on a new health clinic that will serve villagers in the remote and mountainous area.



Tulane students prepare the foundation for the La Fortuna health clinic in Honduras. (Photos from Tim Rinaldi)

The mission, a student undertaking sponsored by the Tulane Catholic Center, has annually sent students to Honduras since 2002. This year, students visited the country during spring break and will leave for their return visit on May 10.

"Every year we spend some time in the city of San Pedro Sula and some time up in the mountains where we've decided to build the clinic," says Tim Rinaldi, a student leader for the [2010 mission](#) who has made four trips to Honduras.

There is a critical need for the mountaintop medical clinic, says Rinaldi, a junior science major.

"One thing we've always noticed is that if anyone ever needed medical attention, they probably would not be able to make it down the mountain to get to a hospital," he adds.

There are about 40 families in each of the 13 villages situated in the El Merendon Mountains, and most of the families do not have motorized transportation to make the three-hour drive into town, Rinaldi says.



Senior Clint Rogers spends time at a home for children with HIV in Honduras.

While the clinic will not offer emergency services, it will be staffed with nurses and a doctor who will visit once per week. Staffing is the result of arrangements made with the Catholic parish in San Pedro Sula.

"We are excited to be able to provide health care to people in desperate need of it," says Rinaldi.

He tells the story of a woman who broke the bones in her hand but never sought medical treatment because "she couldn't get a ride down the mountain."

Typically, students on the annual [mission](#) take part in several community service projects, visiting individuals who are ill and orphanages where they deliver supplies.

The 33 students participating this year raised more than \$15,000 to build, staff and supply the clinic on an ongoing basis.