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Spring Break and More!

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Veronica and Lizzy teaching about nutrition in Teozatlan

Time is flying by so quickly; It's hard to believe that it's the end of March already! So much has been happening that it's hard to find the time to write about it all. Classes have been fairly demanding; we have readings every day, often have writing assignments, and are also supposed to be doing research for our final ten to twelve page paper in anthropology. The fact that all of our classes are in Spanish is an added obstacle on top of the quantity of work we are given, so it seems that reading and writing takes twice as long as usual. Despite the difficulty though, I do think that it is helping improve my Spanish, and I feel more well-informed about the culture and history of Oaxaca.

A few weeks ago we took an excursion to San Pablo Macuilianguis, a small Zapotec community where we interviewed a man who had crossed the border without documents when he was eighteen and visited the school there in which the children were learning how to speak and write Zapotec. We even played a game with the kids, who were very sweet and excited to have us visit.

The following week we took an excursion to Teozatlan where we completed some of our community service hours by helping Veronica in her project teaching about health topics such as general nutrition, obesity, and diabetes. We had three presentations throughout the day. We started out at a kindergarten teaching to the kids and their parents (which wasn't the most successful of the three since we were still a little rusty on our presentations and the kids had short attention spans). Next we went to an elementary school a few minutes away which went a lot smoother as we were slightly more practiced and the kids were more able to focus. They especially loved the quiz on oral hygiene in which we gave out prizes (toothbrushes and toothpaste) if they guessed the correct answer. They were very eager to answer the questions and were very entertained when Cory demonstrated how to floss. At the end of the presentation the kids crowded around us, asking our names and wanting to talk. We had fun chatting with them until it was time to go to our last presentation, teaching high school students and their parents. Though we made some mistakes with the language, it was well worth the difficulty. I think that everyone was very thankful that we made the effort to organize the presentation and come to their town to talk to them. All in all, it was a very rewarding experience.

The free time I have between homework and excursions I usually spend with my family. I've especially gotten close to my host sisters and often go out with them and their friends. A few weeks ago we went bike-riding around the city, which is an organized event every Friday night. There were a ton of people of all ages there and everyone was really enthusiastic. Every once in a while throughout the ride people would chant things such as *una bici mas, un coche menos!* My host sisters and their friends have gone back every Friday since then (I've just gone back once

since we've had excursions), and my sister Lupita is having T-shirts made for all of us to wear the next time we all go. Another tradition we've made besides this one is to watch our friend Cheque play soccer (or futbol as it's called here) every Tuesday night and then go out for coffee at a restaurant called El Mirador which has a beautiful view of the city, especially at night when all of the lights are lit.

Until a week ago I had seen nothing but sun everyday here, but last Sunday we had our first storm with pouring down rain, complete with thunder and lightning. I don't know if I've ever seen so much rain at once, even in Oregon! The hallway leading from the house to the back patio was filled with at least an inch of water which I helped my sister sweep into the drain. I actually thought it was a lot of fun and it was refreshing to see, hear and smell rain again. To heighten the excitement, the following Tuesday there was an earthquake! I was sitting in Spanish class with Lizzie and Cory when we heard an alarm go off, soon after which we could feel the ground shake and see the table, window and door move. It was fairly strong but not so strong that it caused any damage whatsoever at school. It only lasted a few minutes, after which we continued on with class. I later found out that a lot of people were scared since they were in different classrooms from which they could see the whole building move, but we actually found it exciting since most of us hadn't felt an earthquake before. After a storm and an earthquake in the same week however, I think Oaxaca will mellow out again.

With such a crazy week complete with two tests, it's so nice to finally get a vacation! We're now at Zipolote, a beach just outside of Puerto Angel and it is absolutely gorgeous here! We're staying in a hostel right on the beach and sleeping in hammocks facing the ocean. We just got here Friday and so far our days have consisted of lying on the beach, swimming in the ocean, relaxing in the hammocks, and eating some really good food while watching the sun set. We're thinking of going to Puerto Angel and going snorkeling at some point, which I'm looking forward to. I'm also going to go to Puerto Escondido on Friday where I'll meet up with my mom and my sister, which should also be really fun. . . . Anyway, I'll let you know how the rest of my vacation turned out in my next update. For now I'll enjoy my time here while it lasts. Bye for now!

Emmy Elliott