

## College student makes poor Mexican school her mission



Jessica Goddard of New Boston hands out crayons to children at a Mexican school after her initial fund-raising venture

Adrian College senior Jessica Goddard of New Boston has turned a fall semester of studying in Mexico into a chance to change lives.

She spent the 2006 fall term studying in Cuernavaca, Mexico, completing 16 credit hours toward her degree in Spanish.

But after her first month of traditional courses, she discovered a small community of squatters about 30 minutes walking distance from Cuernavaca.

"There is no running water or legal electricity in most of the squatter settlement," Goddard wrote on her Web site ([www.river-tree.net/wings](http://www.river-tree.net/wings)).

"Houses' are constructed from scrap metal and electric-blue tarps. Streets hardly exist, and if they do, they're not what we consider streets; they're pathways worn down into the dirt from years of use."

She spent a day working as a volunteer at a school there called El Rincon de Maria,

teaching children ages 3-7. That day changed her life.

"I found myself in the corridors of the poorest school I have ever seen,"

"Kids ran around in clothes three sizes too big and had Cheeto crumbs in the corners of their mouths because it was all they had for lunch.

"I felt like this was the reason I went to Mexico, and I knew I wanted to stay,"

So she talked to her university coordinator, and arrangements were made for her to work with the children at the school every day instead of attending regular classes.

Her work included teaching the children proper dental care, how to tie shoes and tell time, and helping them learn their colors and numbers.

"Working with the kids on a daily basis was an incredible experience," she said. "Even though they don't have much, they are always in good spirits,"

Goddard felt that she was called by God to help the school, and tried to figure out how best to do that when she got back to Michigan,

She created a PowerPoint presentation telling stories about the community and

about the school, and the need there.

She scheduled appointments with churches and service clubs nearly every weekend during the winter semester after her term in Mexico, and gave her presentation over and over.

Slowly but surely, the donations began to pile up. Some of the key contributions came from the Huron Township Rotary Club and the Family Christian Center of Defiance, Ohio.

Adrian College pitched in with a donation drive for school supplies during the school's annual faculty Christmas party. To date, she's raised more than \$2,500.

Goddard returned to the school in Mexico at the end of the last school year, and delivered the donations.

"It was quite a challenge getting all of the supplies, when we had a limit of 200 pounds of luggage between two people," she said.

With some of the donated funds, Goddard was able to buy a copy machine for the school

"The teachers had to draw all the students' papers by hand," she said.

She gave the school \$500 for books and library shelves and a cement floor for the children to use during recess.

Now Goddard hopes to raise money to finish a roofing unit for the children's playground and do more for the school.

"The experience had a profound effect on me," she said. "I know my place is to work on missions and work with kids. It's just about loving others as much as you love yourself. "And not loving these kids seems impossible to me."

To learn more about Goddard's project, visit her Web site at [.river-ree.net/wings](http://river-ree.net/wings). She plans to return to the school in Mexico over Christmas break and again in the spring.

Donations of money can be sent to The Sanctuary, 114 S. Main, S. Amherst, Ohio, 44074. Write "Jessica Goddard" on the memo line of the check, and the church will send the donations to her.



Jessica Goddard of New Boston was moved by the plight of poor children at Mexican school called Rincon de Maria