

# Spring break with meaning

## Costa Rican trip lets Christian students make most of their time

By VALERIE WEST  
Of The Oakland Press

While many high school students worked on their tans during spring break, students from Oakland Christian School in Auburn Hills were dedicating their time off to helping others in need.

### AUBURN HILLS

About 20 students and 10 adults traveled to Costa Rica on a mission trip with Joshua Expeditions to help work on a church, teach vacation Bible school and visit an orphanage during the break, said Melanie Hendrick, a Spanish teacher at the school.

"These kids that I have, have a love for Jesus Christ," Hendrick said, adding that many of the students helped raise the \$1,800 cost.

Hendrick said she wanted her students to convey a message of hope to the impoverished people of Costa Rica.

"They need the hope of Jesus Christ, and I hope that my kids impart that on those people," she said. "That they will impart hope that even though life is hard now, they will have peace later on."

The students also tested their Spanish-speaking skills.

Hannah Goldstein, 17, traveled with her sister, Olivia, 16, and said she was surprised at how well she could communicate in another language. She believes their presence and time made a difference to the children they visited.

"I feel like I did something with my spring break, not just, 'Oh I got a tan,'" Goldstein said. "It's a reminder that I don't need a nice car or an iPod to be happy in life."

The group not only shared their religious beliefs, they also witnessed the Easter celebrations of another culture.

In Costa Rica, the holiday is a week-long observance, Hendrick said, adding she hoped the students gained a cultural appreciation of the celebrations.

"The rest of the world does not live like us," she said. "They are not just going to church on Good Friday and on Sunday having a ham dinner and going home."

Instead, the citizens celebrated with parades and services. What surprised some of the students most was the emphasis on Maundy Thursday — rather than on Easter Sunday — which represents the Last Supper, Goldstein said.



Mission trippers dig trenches along the road in sweltering heat to help with drainage and sanitation. Students Oakland Christian School in Auburn Hills dedicated their spring break time off to helping others in Costa Rica.



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The students also explored during the trip and traveled to Tortuga Island by raft to see exotic animals and have a barbecue.

"I really did like going on the raft and seeing the wild animals," Alyssa said. "I was a little scared of the howler monkeys. These tiny monkeys make the loudest noises."

One of her favorite moments was spending time with Costa Rican youths. "I was nervous," Alyssa said, noting that she isn't fluent in Spanish. "I was



Costa Ricans put more emphasis on the crucifixion of Jesus than on resurrection. At the end of the procession a wooden replica of Jesus' cross is raised into position to remind everyone of his suffering.