

WALLY'S WORDS

Northland Dispatch

Realtors Do Good Work

By Wally Whipple

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In March, Leslie Rainey with RE/MAX of Kansas City, her husband Pat and their daughter Mallary took time away from their jobs and school to help the people of the Dominican Republic, an island in the Caribbean, which it shares with Haiti.

The Rainey's were among 27 people who traveled to the Caribbean nation with Transformational Journeys, a 4 year-old nonprofit company in Kansas City that organizes humanitarian trips to Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya and the Dominican Republic.

They're also part of a growing group of Americans who are taking time from work and school —often precious vacation time — to do volunteer work across the United States or in developing countries around the world.

"I think there's just a tremendous amount of generosity in the American culture, in the American spirit," said Dan Hickley, the founder of Transformational Journeys and a former campus minister at William Jewell College I Liberty. "When they're given a chance, Americans are just a very generous people."

The Rainey's taught games to children in the community of Villa Nizao. They hauled concrete blocks. They dug trenches with their hands. They helped build a house.

And they brought back memories that will stay with them longer than any tan. Like this one of Leslie's: Sitting in the back of a Toyota pickup truck on a Friday afternoon, saying a final goodbye to a village woman she had worked with all week. "I took my gloves out of the bag and took my tennis shoes off and gave them to her. She started to cry and threw me kisses and said, 'Gracias, gracias.'"

In the last few years they have found more ways to show it through travel. And not just through religious groups. "We've had a tremendous growth of volunteer based



Leslie picks up some masonry skills from her Dominican friends.

organizations in the last 15 years, I think," said Mark Kinney, executive committee chairman for the International Volunteer Programs Association, a New York based alliance of nearly 50 nonprofit, nongovernmental volunteer groups. That growth can be traced to several factors, including the affluence and raging of the baby boom generation, said Kinney, a retired professor at the University of Toledo in Ohio. Another is "globalization, in the sense of Americans knowing what's going on in the world," he said.

The list of volunteer jobs is nearly as diverse as the people who do them. About 275 organizations will be listed in the newest edition of Volunteer Vacation, ranging from groups that want to build trails or do carpentry work to those who Journeys teach English or staff health clinics. And it doesn't include the thousands of churches and other religious organizations across the country that send

members on mission trips every year.

Already this year Transformational Journeys has organized four trips for Kansas City area groups, including two from St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Overland Park. Over spring break, groups went to Guatemala to build a community center and worked on an irrigation project, and Honduras, where they worked with AIDS patients, retiree's and children.

The Rainey's traveled to the Dominican Republic with a group of workers from Peterson Manufacturing Co, a Grandview business that makes products for the transportation industry. Peterson paid the expenses for 22 people, including Pat Rainey, who is president of Motorsport Marketing, a Peterson subsidiary. But, Pat and Leslie were so excited by prospects for the trip that they paid \$2,800 for Leslie and Mallary to take part too.

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