

lives changing.

STUDENT MISSIONS
AT SOUTHERN

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Collin Emde, left, and a fellow missionary hang out with the kids.



COLLIN EMDE

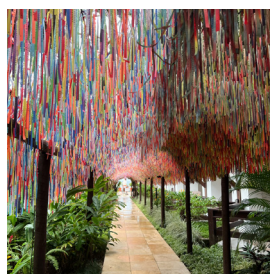
Collin is a sophomore finance major currently serving as a student missionary in Rurrenabaque, Bolivia. He is a house parent at Familia Feliz.

Kids will be kids. They will scrape their knees, laugh constantly, refuse to listen, attempt to take some sugar from the fridge, and cry for attention as soon as they feel it's necessary. Every day, from the rooster's first crow till the cicada's last hum, my full-time job at Familia Feliz is to ensure that the needs of my 13 boys, ages 5-15, are met. Even though I have been here for only about six weeks, the experiences I have been brought through have helped me notice daily miracles that would have slipped my mind before. Noticing these miracles has made me view the lives of my kids in a different light.

As an orphanage/boarding school, Familia Feliz has the

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FAITH. SURRENDER. JOURNEY. PURPOSE. JOY.

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opportunity to reach the lives of many families that want or NEED help. Many of our kids come from complicated backgrounds and did not have the opportunity to simply “be a kid”. As my time here continues, the backgrounds of the children become more and more apparent. An experience I had with one of my 6-year-olds, Eli*, perfectly describes this strange phenomenon.

It was a Thursday, the day off for my co-parent Zoro. It was my second week here, and the boys had been learning more about me, just as I had learned more about them. Everything had mostly gone smooth that day, until just before dinner. To avoid chores, they all ran across a small bridge out front. This led to a rather confusing and poignant conversation with my older guys at dinner (none of them speak English, and I don't know Spanish). After a rather intense dinner, the boys got ready for bed. My 6-year-old, Eli, was yawning and clearly sleepy, so I placed him in his bed.

Soon after that, it was time for worship. Since I don't speak Spanish, I rely on many worship videos such as “Historia de la Biblia” by Saddleback Kids. I started playing the video for my boys when I heard distant crying. I left the video playing and ran upstairs to see what the issue was. There was Eli in his bed alone, sleeping and crying.

I scurried over to him as the cry got louder and louder. When I arrived, I realized that I couldn't do anything. He was asleep, yet he was crying. A night terror. I couldn't imagine what he

was seeing. I don't know where his dream came from. All I knew was that he had been smiling 30 minutes before. All I could do was to hold him and pray.

I prayed and began to hum any Christian song that came to mind. I don't remember what the songs were, but as I continued, the noises subsided. He was calmed by Christ. He is a kid. He has no control over his dreams, and I had no way of helping him other than praying and humming. The experiences that brought little Eli to our Familia Feliz may have had a hold on him throughout his life. However, the comfort that God can give him and every child here may provide a sense of peace that will prayerfully take over their harsh history.

*Name has been changed for security reasons.



Want to Hear More Stories?



Edvan Benitez and Emily Schneider interview Melanie Hansen, a sophomore pre-dental hygiene major who served in Nicaragua.

The Students Missions department is excited to launch a new podcast called “Yours to Use.” Every episode, we interview a returned student missionary to learn about the joys, struggles, funny stories, and God moments during their experience. Tune it to hear amazing stories about how God is working around the world.

Check out our podcast on your favorite podcast streaming platforms!

Peace in Palau



BRITTANY BRAISTER-STURGIS

Brittany is a elementary education alumna who is serving as a missionary at Palau SDA Elementary. She is a 5th grade teacher.

Freshman year I decided I wanted to be a student missionary during the oh-so-emotional SM vespers - which is conveniently scheduled a few weeks into the school year. It wouldn't be until after I graduated that I would take this terrifying step.

The islands seemed like the perfect place to serve. I mean—those sunsets, right? I never even gave other spots a chance. It was the islands or nothing. After my peers served in Palau, it seemed like the obvious choice. My interview with the principal went wonderfully, and we hit it off right away. Doors were opening, and God was leading me through them. Whenever I mentioned that this was a possibility for me post-graduation, I was showered with support.

Upon my decision to go, I completely refused to even think about what I had signed up for. Yes, I crafted an Instagram post, and in it I told everyone where I was going and what I would be doing, but other than those conversations, Palau was not a part of my vocabulary. The month before my life was packed in a suitcase, panic set in. Every time I thought about leaving, my heart would race and I would remind myself, "You still have a whole month! Why are you even freaking out?" Eventually, I had no more words of encouragement to tell myself. My fate was here.



Brittany Braister-Sturgis poses with her students in the classroom.

My last night at home, I felt extreme anxiety. I had my alarm set to 4 a.m. so that I would have time to eat and make sure I had everything. Regardless of this incredibly early alarm, my subconscious continued to scare me awake. I was flooded with questions such as: "Why am I leaving the comfort of my home? Who forced me to do this, and what will I do without my family being so close?" I'm sure I wasn't the only missionary that night feeling this way, but it sure did seem like I was the only one.

When my family and I arrived at the airport misty-eyed, I was ready to turn in my two-weeks notice. This wasn't for me. My parents guided me through every doubt and helped me pray for peace. My mantra became, "God, give me your peace as I follow Your plan."

I'm now two months into this experience, and that prayer has continued to be with me every step of the way. In each phase of life, it is a guarantee that days will be difficult, especially when you're doing God's work. It is only natural for the enemy to work against the things God has called you to do. I encourage you, whenever you are doing the will of God, to pray for the "peace that passes all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). When God is on your side, you will have nothing to fear.

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