

Mercy College students engage in service learning in Antigua, Guatemala

Submitted by Sr. Karen Elliott

Eleven students who were enrolled in the Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS) Course “Mission, Healthcare Ministry, and Enculturation” traveled to Antigua, Guatemala from March 2 to 9. Led by Sister Karen Elliott, C.PP.S., D.Min, Chairperson and Associate Professor of the Religious Studies Department along with Susan Bernheisel, RN, MSN, EdD, these students ministered to children with severe physical and/or mental disabilities who are patients at Santo Hermano Pedro, a long-term care facility. This facility is home to many children who are brought there by their families who have no other recourse for their care.

This trip is the required service learning component of the course. Precious Blood Sister Margo Young is a physician who ministered in Guatemala for many years. She joined the group in this service learning opportunity. At the end of each day, the students, the professors, and Dr. Young prayed together and engaged in theological reflection related to the experiences of the day.

“The students had hands-on encounters with the suffering poor,” Sister Elliott said. “And in light of this total immersion experience, the students have come to appreciate their vocational call to healthcare and its fundamental dimension of mission. A long-term hope would be that some of the students may even choose to dedicate their lives and profession to working among the poor – whether in free clinics in Ohio and Michigan or in other areas throughout the world.”

Following the trip, the students lead follow-up discussions and gave PowerPoint presentations to the College community on March 13 at Mercy College of Ohio. Additionally, five of the students involved in the service learning in Guatemala traveled to Dayton, Ohio on March 16 to share their presentation with the Sisters of the Precious Blood residing at the motherhouse.



The entire group of Mercy College of Ohio students, Dr. Susan Bernheisel, Sr. Karen Elliott, Sr. Margo Young and the Director of Volunteers at Santo Hermano Pedro. Contributed photo



Srs Margo Young and Karen Elliott with patients at Santo Hermano Pedro. Contributed photo