

## January News: Splishin' and a Splashin'

Happy 2010! Wow this year has seemed to fly by, especially these past 2 months. December and January were PACKED with activities and I just spent the last hour looking through my journal, trying to organize in my mind what seems to be a beautiful blur of movement and business. At the end of each day, I try to recognize and name something holy (experience, person, etc..) that I experienced that day. I find that this exercise helps me to be present in day to day life, and seek out the beauty in a world where goodness sometimes feels scarce. I use the word holiness in the sense of recognizing something sacred, recognizing something that touches the soul, a moment where time seems to stop just so we don't miss it. I believe that God, is present in these moments of holiness, but depending on your religious background/beliefs, you may define this word/experience differently.

Many of the "holy moments" these past two months include water in some way or form. Water is essential to our being. It renews, rejuvenates, and refreshes (especially in this Buenos Aires heat!) so that we can walk back outside, comfortable, relieved, and clean. Below I have shared various moments this past month in which water was present.

I hope that you find 2010 filled with holy moments! Thank you for your love and support! I would love to keep in touch! You can contact me at [kinzcr01@luther.edu](mailto:kinzcr01@luther.edu).

PEACE

Cristina

### Let's Get Muddy!!

In Mid-December we had an end of the year party at Providencia. We showed up around 9am to start decorating despite the threatening dark clouds that were slowly moving in. We spend the whole morning setting up speakers, blowing up balloons, and preparing for the afternoon ahead; thinking that pure will would scare away the storm clouds in the sky. At around 2pm it



began to pour. We quickly gathered all of the decorations safely inside and stood by the door watching buckets of rain pour down. The front "yard" of Providencia quickly turned into a muddy pool of knee-deep water. Before we knew it, about 12 boys of all ages were outside playing soccer in the rain. Laughter rang throughout the neighborhood as they slipped and slid in the mud. After spending a while getting good and muddy, we (I was one of 2 girls playing) came inside and shared plates of pasta and cups of juice. What could have ended in disappointment turned into a day where the rain stopped time and worries, and brought life, laughter, and community to the barrio Providencia.

### Swimmin' and a Splashin'

In January, I helped out with a camp for teens from the community center. We stayed on a farm about 1 hour away from the city and spent two intense days of swimming, playing, conversing, singing, etc. The one thing that seemed to reach my heart this weekend was the quick but rare transformation I saw in each of the teens when we spent time in the pool. Alejandra, a 13 year old girl who comes from a home of violence and abuse, is always very serious and often has a face that looks hard, like stone. We were in the pool and I was helping her learn how to float. Something so simple, something that I have been able to do since before I could walk brought a look of wonder, vulnerability, pride, surprise, and peace to her eyes. Caren (the younger sister of Alejandra) smiles often, but between smiles carries a haunted look in her eyes and on her face. There was one point during this weekend where one of the volunteers was pulling her around the pool as she floated on her back with her eyes closed, trusting completely in the water to hold her up. She later asked if we could stay there forever. I was hit by the fact that this might be the first place and time in her life where she has felt 100% safe. I was awed by the changes I saw in 3 short hours of playing in the pool's refreshing water .



## Rock Solid

The weeks leading up to Christmas I decided to lead an activity in the elderly home to help prepare for the end of the year party. A group of about 6 residents and I made small Santa Claus figurines out of plaster to give as a Christmas gift to the people who work in the hogar on a daily basis. The first day, I arrived early at the hogar and prepared the whole package of plaster by adding water to the white powder. I divided the plaster into individual cups to make it easier for the residents to fill the molds and once everything was in place, I headed upstairs to start wheeling the participants downstairs. After I wheeled the last person to the table, I looked up to find the pastor grinning at me. He proceeded to ask me if I passed introductory chemistry (which I did!) as he held up one of the cups by the spoon, making it look like a tasty popsicle ready to eat. In the time it took me to wheel all of the residents downstairs, the plaster had dried leaving me with 10 cups filled with dry plaster and zero santa claus molds. Luckily, the pastor offered to go buy more plaster while I conversed with the amused residents. The second try was much more successful and I was sure to continually add water to the cups of plaster. I suppose next time it would do me some good to read the directions.....

## Mmmmm so sweet

I now understand why water without gas (carbonation) is called agua dulce (sweet water) in Spanish. For Christmas, David (my brother) made the long journey down to visit for a week. We traveled to the southern part of Argentina and visited the Perito Moreno glacier, the most famous glacier in Argentina. We spent the day walking on the glacier; exploring the crevices, jumping over the eroded streams, and soaking up the beautiful scenery. At one point, the guide gave us the “ok” to fill our water bottles up from one of the intensely-blue streams. When I took my first sip, the water was so pure and cold that it tasted sweet. Sometimes to taste the sweetness of life you need to return to the source, life in its simplest form. Many Argentines make a conscious effort to spend a week or two each year enjoying the sweetness and simplicity of life away from electronics, politics, drama, and work...a practice often not recognized as important in our



society, I believe the term in English is VACATION. From what I have seen, heard, and experienced, many working Argentines take a few weeks to RELAX and rejuvenate their body and soul before they begin another year of work. I think this is a practice that our fast-paced society can learn from, whether it means taking a few weeks to completely relax each year, or reserving a day each week to rest and enjoy the simplicities in life, such as eating a good meal with family and friends.

## Dancing on top of Mountains in the Rain

The last week of January, I went on a mission trip to the Northern part of Argentina. We stayed in the town of Rodeo and spent the week visiting homes, planning activities, and organizing/leading mass. Every morning we walked from house to house, visiting and talking with the residents. Our last day in Rodeo, we all crammed into a pick up truck and headed up a mountain. When the truck was unable to go further, we got out and walked about 3 hours to a house on top of the mountain, overlooking some of the most spectacular scenery I have ever encountered. Eugenia, the owner, is a 76 year old women whose face scrunches up from top to bottom when she smiles. When we arrived, Euogenia welcomed us into her humble home and spent the next hour or so telling us stories from her childhood. She (like many of the other residents) talked about the drought they were experiencing, and the devastating effect it was having on their livestock and crops. After lunch, she asked if we could pray together. As we sat outside her adobe house on top of a mountain, full from lunch, praying with Euogenia and her family, it began to rain. I opened my eyes and looked around and everyone was looking up at the sky, grinning as the large drops of water splashed onto our faces. This is when time stopped. The guitar was whipped out and we began to sing and dance in. What surprised me the most, was that Euogenia was dancing right along with us, laughing and singing as the much needed rain soaked into the land.