

On July 4th, Glen Barth and I touched down at O'Hare International after spending a week and a half in Costa Rica and Panama. It so happened that our plane arrived as fireworks were shooting off all over Chicagoland and hundreds of thousands were celebrating our nation's independence and the freedoms we enjoy today.



Seeing all the fireworks, I was reminded of the blessings we enjoy as citizens of this country. And at the same time, I was reminded of the people we met and communities we visited in Panama, where the simplest things which we may take for granted—clean water, basic health care, education for all from K-12, good roads and basic sanitation—are lacking in the lives of many people.

While in Panama, we were hosted by a Christian mission, Operation Safe Drinking Water. People in Northeast Iowa, among them the Decorah Rotary

and the Upper Iowa River Conference of the WELCA, have supported this mission with financial resources and by volunteer workers who have traveled to Panama and installed clean drinking water systems. One of the churches of Northeast Iowa, Decorah Lutheran Church, has funded the construction of twenty nine such systems, many of the newest systems installed in village schools, and has sent more than thirty people to Panama to build these systems and provide basic first aid to the indigenous people of western Panama.



I would like to invite you to consider supporting this mission of health and care in western Panama. Our church will aid individuals, groups, and churches who would like to organize their own service trips to Panama. We would welcome individuals from the community and other churches to join us as we travel to Panama next February. And we will make sure that gifts of financial resources and medicine reach the mission and are used in the best ways possible.

Our next trips will focus on installing water systems and providing basic first aid clinics. One need not be a building contractor or a nurse to come. If you are willing to help our builders or nurses, if you have a love for people, and if you would like to make a difference in people's lives, please consider joining us. Please contact Decorah Lutheran Church for information on how you can go to Panama with us, support this mission financially, or plan your own service trip.

We are already collecting over the counter medications and first aid items for our next trip. These items can be brought to our church office. There is a need for:

First Aid Needs For Panama

Children's and Adult Tylenol

Children's and Adult Cold and Decongestant tablets or liquids

Ibuprofen

Hydrocortisone Creams

Antibiotic Ointments

Muscle Cream

Benadryl—tablets or cream