



# Matt and April Sykes

November  
2018

## ...serving the Lord in Puerto Rico

Dear Friends and Family,

Thank you for faithfully taking the time to read our newsletter, and for your support, through prayer or finances, making it possible for us to serve in Juana Díaz, Puerto Rico. Matt is the Mission Adventure Teams Director at Camp Caribe where we host short-term mission teams that serve at camp and in the community. April is the director of Club Maravilla, the after-school center, where we provide a safe place for kids in our neighborhood to play, learn, and grow in their relationship with Christ. Even though we work in two separate ministries we both are intentionally building relationships to effectively share the gospel so that our community can be impacted for Christ.

We are incredibly thankful for all the prayers and support that we received this past year while trying to recover from Hurricane Maria. We are excited to report that power was fully restored at Camp Caribe on June 12. Camp went a total of 266 days without power while our home and the after-school building went 136 days without power. This experience certainly challenged us and made us realize just how much we take electricity for granted. The good news is having the power restored at Camp Caribe meant they were able to run summer programs more or less like normal. Unfortunately, we are still unable to use the chapel because a large portion of the roof is missing. We hope to repair it soon now that camp is finished with all its summer activities.

This year's summer camp was a huge success. We had a total of 26 kids make first-time decisions for Christ and many more rededicate their lives to Christ! Praise God! That is a big part of why we host mission teams year-round at Camp Caribe. All the hard work our mission teams put into building, painting, and cleaning at camp goes toward the betterment of our facilities. We want to provide an attractive, well-maintained facility so our campers tell their friends how they were impacted at Camp. Having more kids attend camp means more campers will be exposed to the gospel and hopefully a greater impact for Christ.

This summer, we hosted approximately 20 mission teams. Some of the teams did physical labor at the camp, others did work in the community, but most groups did a combination of the two. The after-school center had almost every mission team from Camp partner with us to impact our kids and to improve the facilities. Many teams helped to enclose the building so that we don't have to close during the rainy season and now we have a fully functioning bathroom at Club! We are so thankful for the improvement to our building as we are headed back into storm season.

Normally during the summer months, the after-school center is closed so that we can encourage our kids to attend camp and update our building. This year because of the weeks we were closed due to hurricane Maria, we chose to keep Club open most



Above: A MAT Team working on painting the outside of one of the buildings at Camp Caribe



Below: Matt with Jean Carlos



Above: April with two girls from Club Maravilla



Above: Our summer interns

Below: Rachel Stevens who helped out at Club Maravilla



Above: Playing in the GaGa pit

of the summer. Our kids each did community service to earn their scholarships and we sent 23 kids to camp. While a couple of our kids had been to camp before, 13 of our kids went for the first time. They all had an opportunity to learn about Christ and to be encouraged as Christ followers to live for His glory. Two of our kids accepted Christ into their hearts—one boy, Taone, who has been coming to Club for a couple years, and Lexa, one of our older girls. We are thankful for the impact Camp has had on our kids. We also had a unique opportunity to have the camp counselors come to the after-school center and plan a day of activities and games. Hopefully, we will be able to partner again next year.

Hosting this many teams would not have been possible without the help of our summer interns. We would like to send a huge thank you to Ben, Megan, Sierra, Tyler, Gabi, and Rachel for giving their time to serve God in Puerto Rico this summer. We would also like to thank the mission teams who came down to serve in Puerto Rico. You guys rocked! We had several other volunteers at camp this summer, including Nathan Johnson (maintenance director at Grace Christian University) and his family. Thank you to everyone who helped us out at Camp this year!

A highlight from this summer was when we took a group from Port Orchard, Washington, into the Ponce town square so that they could perform a couple of songs they had rehearsed, along with a skit they had learned. It was a rainy afternoon, and maybe three people gathered around for the performance. This was not the crowd we were hoping for. It turns out someone from the mayor's staff noticed them singing while she was grabbing something from her car. That person ended up telling all her colleagues about the group and they watched from their offices above. Once the group was finished, we were asked to come up and meet the mayor. That doesn't happen every day! We were able to speak with the mayor and some of her staff about Camp Caribe and what the group was doing in Puerto Rico. It just goes to show that you never know who is watching.

Currently, we are traveling around the United States speaking about God's ministries in Puerto Rico. We have had the opportunity to visit with Valley Bible Church in Virginia and Bethesda Church in Minnesota. We greatly enjoyed our time with all our fellow believers and would like to mention a huge thanks to our hosts for making us feel welcome in their homes. While we are away, Club is being run by our Puerto Rican friend, Jean Carlos (pictured on the front with Matt), for four weeks with the help of Sheri Gillhespy and Agnes Roberts. He left October 1 to return to Costa Rica and continue his missionary journey. Unfortunately, the after-school center will be closed for six weeks until we return to Puerto Rico on November 10. Keep our kids in your prayers and continue to pray with us that God will send a volunteer to help run Club when we are unable to. Thank you again for all your continued support and prayers.

Please pray:

- For safety in our travels around the country while we are on home assignment
- That things would run smoothly at Club while we are away, and that someone would step up to keep Club open in the month of October after Jean Carlos leaves
- That we would continue to show the kids at Club Maravilla the love of Christ and continue sharing the gospel with them
- That we will be able to recruit mission teams and interns for 2019

*Matt and April Sykes*