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Illinois Wesleyan Students Help Children, Elderly in Jamaica

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – While many Illinois Wesleyan students spent their spring breaks soaking in the sun or catching up on assignments for classes, 22 students from the campus group Death, Resurrection, Life (DRL) traveled to Kingston, Jamaica, to volunteer at the Salvation Army School for the Blind.

“The [Salvation Army] compound had an orphanage, a home for elderly blind women, a preschool and a church. We spent the week doing various work projects, putting on Vacation Bible School (VBS), giving swimming lessons and observing in the classroom,” said junior history major Rachel Rock of Dunlap, Ill.

Projects accomplished by the group included cleaning out rooms and helping paint a mural at the orphanage. While participants on the trip agree that it was fun to complete the projects, they say that the best part was building relationships with the children.

“These children are incredible. They don’t want anyone to feel sorry for them, have the best attitudes and outlooks on life, huge dreams for their future, and so much to teach each of us about faith,” said senior mathematics major Amy VanDerVoorn of Peoria who co-led the trip with junior psychology major Andrew Frankel of Rochester, Minn.

While in Jamaica, VanDerVoorn worried over whether the children would have the opportunity to pursue their dreams for the future. Her doubts were put to rest, however, after meeting Ms. Thorpe, a student teacher at the school. “She was once a student at the [Salvation Army School for the Blind],” said VanDerVoorn, who accomplished her dream.

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