

On a Mission

Alyson Roth (pictured right) will have a lot to tell her students when they ask her what she did this summer. The elementary school music teacher spent several days performing missionary work in a new village being built in Nicaragua.

Roth, a former Shepherd patient, is working to help hundreds of people move and settle into a new village. Their former village was wiped out by mudslides caused by Hurricane Mitch in 1998.

During the trip—one of several she's taken to Nicaragua—Roth ministered to women and children in the community, taught music classes at a school for the blind and helped at an orphanage for children with disabilities.

Roth, who was injured in a car accident in July 2000, became interested in missionary work in Nicaragua after The Getsemani Boy's Choir from Chinandega, Nicaragua performed at the elementary school in which she teaches. The young boys inspired her to help those less fortunate than herself.

"These boys leave their families for several months every year to help the poor, and their sacrifice enables countless children to have hope for a better future," she said.

Roth went to Central America with Amigos for Christ, an organization located in Buford, Ga., that helps families in impoverished areas rebuild their lives by buying land and creating new villages. The group bought 52 acres of land to build a village—called Villa Catalina—for people whose village was destroyed by the mudslides. They had been living near a garbage dumpsite since the disaster.

"Amigos for Christ has constructed homes, schools and medical facilities in this area," she said. "Anyone may move to the new village, but they must send at least one family member to work there each day until the village is built."

Roth plans to return again because of the kind attitude she experiences there. At first, she said she was concerned about accessibility in the third-world country, but, "Once I was there, I realized accessibility is all about what you make it. If you're willing to ask for help, then you can go anywhere and do anything."



Alyson Roth and friends.



Owen with Clapton.

Music to His Ears

It's not every day a kid gets to meet his hero. But it happens. A few weeks before his discharge date from Shepherd, 16-year-old **Jake Owen** (pictured left with **Eric Clapton**) had the night of his life.

Owen's physical therapist, Cathi Dugger, pulled a few strings and arranged to get two free tickets to the Eric Clapton concert in Atlanta from local radio station Z93, where a disc jockey had heard about Owen and helped to arrange the surprise. Owen had played guitar from the age of four and grew up listening to the rock legend and trying to play his songs. But after a car accident in August 2003 injured his spinal cord, Owen hadn't been able to pick up a guitar. When the pair arrived at Philips Arena for the concert, they learned that their seats had been upgraded to a suite with two backstage passes waiting for them. Once backstage, Owen got the chance to meet Clapton and get his autograph, as well as a picture of the two of them he'll always treasure. "Jake's reaction was so fantastic when we got backstage - I've never seen someone's eyes get so big," Dugger said. Owen was invited by Clapton's touring crew to catch another concert in Buffalo, N.Y. after heading home.