



Community Page

Ecuador trip eye-opener for church group

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**
The Champion

To someone living in a ramshackle home without running water in Ecuador, it's mind boggling to think some North Americans have so much stuff they need rental units to store it all.

It's this "excessively excessive" way of life to which Karen Hatton's attention was drawn on her recent missions trip to Guayaquil, Ecuador with a team of eight other people from Milton's Southside Community Church.

"A lot of kids (in Ecuador) didn't even have toys to play with, yet they kept themselves busy and out of trouble. Our kids complain about being bored and that there's nothing to do," she said Friday, just two days after arriving home.

"That part I found frustrating. We have so much, but we're not thankful for what we have."

The team, which left November 5, was led by Ms Hatton, along with church member Aaron Lalvani. They travelled to Ecuador to partner with a local church and talk to the people there about their faith, hoping to see lives changed and — at the very least — create an interest in Christianity.

And they did. But in the process, they themselves were also changed.

New perspective on life

Ms Hatton said she returned from Ecuador a person different from the one who left. Gone is the person whose most important job was juggling the tasks on her 'to do' list as a customer support representative for a technical hotline.

In its place is someone who's decided to take a lesson from the Ecuadorians and lead a slower, calmer pace of life focused on what's truly important and also to cultivate a deeper appreciation for what she has.

This is the second trip Ms Hatton has taken to Ecuador, and as with the first visit, it was the people who truly impacted her, she said. No matter what struggles they faced, they smiled at the strangers from Canada. No matter how little they had, they offered it up to the visitors.

"The people were so kind — so warm and welcoming," she said.

Some of the group's time was spent talking to people in the ghetto of Duran, an

eye-opening experience. It's a poor area that starkly contrasts the more middle-class suburb of Guayaquil.

The picture Ms Hatton painted of this impoverished community wasn't pretty. Even the landscape was dismal, with mostly dirt and just a few trees. The homes had often just one room and there was no running water, plumbing or sewage system.

"It wasn't clean at all," Ms Hatton said.

Solution not simple

The group's natural instinct was to want to give the people money. But the problem — and solution — is much more complex, Ms Hatton said.

"That would've helped them for a limited time. But they need government involvement — people with money to see beyond their four walls. If there was some way to get those with money to give some to those without... Those with money have so much they don't know what to do with it."

Co-leader Mr. Lalvani, who has now been to Ecuador three times, said many of the team members — including himself — became quite emotional over what they saw.

"My gosh, we have garages full of boxes. Here in North America, we accumulate so much. We fill our lives with things and pay to have them stored. They don't understand that there. They have no concept of that," he said.

Something tangible the team was able to do for their host church was pay for the pastor there to have some tests done at the hospital for a liver problem. He couldn't afford it on his own.

Mr. Lalvani agreed with Ms Hatton that the people in Ecuador are unforgettable.

"Ecuadorians are peaceful people. The people are welcoming — they bond with you. All of a sudden, you're part of their family."

While there, the team met with a Habitat for Humanity group that's starting up in Ecuador, and Mr. Lalvani said Southside Community Church hopes to send some people to assist them in the future.

One of the things Mr. Lalvani said stands out in his mind is the willingness of the people there to hear about Christianity — possibly because it was being delivered by Canadians.

"Canadians are revered — it's a land of wealth (in their eyes)," Mr. Lalvani said, adding, "We were there to tell them God loves them just as much as (he loves) us."

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com.



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Karen Hatton and Aaron Lalvani show a mountain of travel gear, as well as some big smiles, after a rewarding trip to Ecuador.

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Cogeco Cable Channel 14

Programming Schedule — Tuesday, November 23 - Monday, November 29, 2004

Tuesday, November 23		Wednesday, November 24		Thursday, November 25		Friday, November 26		Saturday, November 27		Sunday, November 28		Monday, November 29	
Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA
5:00am - 8:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA
8:00am - 1:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	11:00am	Oster Health Connection	11:00am	The War Amps present...	11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA
1:00pm - 2:00pm	SportsZONE Live (Replay)	11:30am	SportsZONE Live (Replay)	Noon	Swap Talk (Replay)	11:30am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Noon	Plugged In! EXTRA	11:30am	Oster Health Connection	11:30am	Plugged In! EXTRA
2:00pm - 5:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	12:00pm	PeopleSpeak	1:00pm - 6:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00pm - 5:00pm	Oster Health Connection	Noon	Acton Santa Claus Parade	6:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	11:00am	Oster Health Connection
5:00pm - 6:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00pm	Hilton Hills Council Nov 22, 2004	6:00pm	PeopleSpeak	Noon - 5:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00pm - Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA	6:30pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	11:30am	Oster Health Connection
6:00pm	Oster Health Connection	4:00pm - 6:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	6:30pm	Oster Health Connection	1:00pm	Hilton Region Council Nov 24	Midnight	Midnight	7:30pm	The War Amps present...	12:30pm	PeopleSpeak
6:30pm	Optimist TV Bingo (Live)	6:00pm	PeopleSpeak	7:00pm - 8:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	4:00pm - 5:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00pm - Midnight	Acton Santa Claus Parade	8:00pm	Acton Santa Claus Parade	1:00pm	The War Amps present...
7:30pm	PeopleSpeak	6:30pm	The War Amps present...	8:00pm	Hilton Region Council Nov 24	5:00pm - 7:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00pm - Midnight	Acton Santa Claus Parade	9:00pm	Acton Santa Claus Parade	1:30pm	PeopleSpeak
8:00pm	Hilton Hills Council Nov 22, 2004	7:30pm	Swap Talk (Live)	11:00pm - Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA	7:00pm	Oster Health Connection	10:00pm - Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA	10:00pm - Midnight	Acton Santa Claus Parade	2:00pm	Acton Santa Claus Parade
11:00pm - Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:30pm	Auto Experts (Live)			7:30pm	Acton Santa Claus Parade					3:00pm - 8:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA
		9:00pm - Midnight	Milton Council Nov 22, 2004									8:00pm	SportsZONE Live

Acton Santa Claus Parade - Friday, 7:30pm & Sunday, 9:00pm