From Whitney Milburn, Senior, St. David’s School of Nursing Student

“I have returned from Peru with inspiration, motivation, and an increased passion for nursing, learning, and serving others.”

In Peru, we had the unique opportunity of working with Operation Smile – an organization that travels worldwide to perform cleft lip and cleft palate surgeries for children. Health professionals from around the world joined together to work towards a common goal; an excellent demonstration of interdisciplinary collaboration within healthcare. We were able to gain hands-on experience in the various aspects of peri-operative nursing.

Also, we worked in the clinic in Viña Vieja, a rural community that was devastated by an earthquake in 2007. We helped organize the pharmacy, performed well-baby exams, glucose and blood pressure screenings, and held a basic CPR class for the youth. Prior to the trip, I hoped to be able to somehow make an impact, a difference. However, I think the people of this community had a much greater impact on me.

From the people of Viña Vieja, I learned:

- Language is a barrier easily overcome, benefits of teamwork, Peruvian culture, aspects of community nursing, how much I take for granted on a daily basis, the importance of laughter, un poco español, and how to accept and love people I just met.

Dr. Arevalo-Flechas (“Dr. A”) provided immense support and guidance throughout our journey and served as a role model of compassion for all people – an important quality in nursing. She helped show us the “art” of nursing that we have read about in class – caring about people, not just for them. At times, it required stepping outside of our comfort zones and being open to new experiences, challenging ourselves mentally and sometimes physically, and overcoming barriers to build relationships. I am thankful for new bonds made with people in Peru, and for the strengthened and unique bonds among the “Peru 2012 Crew”.

I have returned from Peru with inspiration, motivation, and an increased passion for nursing, learning, and serving others. This truly was a life-changing experience and I feel blessed to have had this eye-opening opportunity.