

Ella Brinkman: “One takeaway is to be patient with my student and with myself. There were times I would try to say what I wanted to in English in different ways for her to understand. I also had to be patient with myself because sometimes I could not explain it accurately in Spanish and would have to come up with creative ways to do so. Another thing that I learned was that it is okay to make mistakes. I was so nervous to make a mistake because she looked up to me and I was helping her, but then I realized that we are all human and all make mistakes. These mistakes also make us better and help us at the end of the day.”

Megan Swope: “The ability to speak another language such as Spanish provides opportunities to connect with and help people I would not be able to communicate with otherwise. From speaking to the Oaxacan student weekly, I learned how privileged I am to be able to speak English and live in the United States. He would always tell me how important it is to speak English to get a good job and be considered ‘educated’ in their society. My ability to speak Spanish and volunteer with the Oaxaca Learning Center is helping him in pursuing this goal.”

Jenna Regec: “With my partner, we shared colloquialisms in both languages, so it was interesting to learn how many of the things we say are essentially word for word, even across countries and languages. I also got more experience hearing the accent from Mexico, which was slightly different than the one I heard in Costa Rica while studying abroad.”

Lealer Powell: “I learned more about the culture and became more comfortable with conversation. I also learned where my strengths and weaknesses are in my speaking.”

Students also volunteered their time and energy channeling their Spanish skills for other settings and activities to support their communities and people seeking to improve their understanding of the English language.

Emma Powers: “I worked as an in-home tutor for a local family that just adopted three girls (sisters) from Colombia. The girls are in 2nd, 7th, and 10th grade and did not speak any English prior to coming to the United States. [I learned that] knowledge of a second language opens many doors to friendships and relationships that would otherwise be challenging if not impossible. [Also learned to] never be afraid to humble yourself by admitting what you don't know or by rephrasing your questions to seek clarification.”

Amy Lakritz: “[I worked at the] Hartville migrant clinic [as] volunteer pediatrician. Evaluated and treated patients for minor illness and complaints. [Volunteering] improves cultural competency; facilitates mutual understanding of issues; increases sense of well-being for volunteer and those who are served”.

Joshua Pachancha: “[I worked with] Proyecto Raíces. I helped this organization set up during events to raise funding for the children that are a part of that org. I sent out word to recruit those who are willing to give money. I also attended meetings to see how we would set up for festivals (during Hispanic Heritage Month). [Working with them] I learned that the world is a big place, there is a lot to learn from different people in different languages. Also, I have taken away that Spanish is very calm and makes Spanish-speakers feel more welcome.”

Mason Beal: I volunteered for the Immigrant Worker Project, where I was assigned a young man, a 20-year-old immigrant from Mexico that I mentored. I helped him improve his English and motivated/advised him on his goals regarding his career. I learned that English is a very hard second language to learn, and that many immigrants struggling to learn English are treated very poorly.”

Galilea Bautista: “[I worked with] Camp Imagine If. I tutored English Student Learning (ESL) kids after school and watched over them. [I learned that] it’s very rewarding knowing that your student learned and progressed a lot since the beginning. Another takeaway is that learning another language, such as Spanish, helped me communicate better with a student and it made the student feel better too.”

Amy Quitter: “[I participated in a] language exchange. It showed me once again that knowing another language opens me up to so many new people that I wouldn't have been able to speak with otherwise. Also, learning a language alongside someone else that is also learning can be challenging and filled with mistakes, but it's worth it!”

Although students Nadine Salem and Alia Baig did not use Spanish proactively in their volunteering activities, they contributed substantially to campus and local organizations in capacities that improved the lives and experiences of others.

Nadine Salem: “I did not get the opportunity to volunteer with Oaxaca Learning Center, however, I did spend the fall semester leading two organizations on campus. I currently serve as Chapter President of Tau Beta Pi, a national engineering honors society, where we organized 11 local community service events. I also serve as President and Co-Founder of Students for Justice in Palestine, where I've been leading efforts to educate students on campus and raise awareness about the occupation in Palestine. In general, [I learned that] having the skill of multilingualism is a huge asset to a person's knowledge and understanding of the world. Learning different languages opens you up to different cultures and ways of life, which allows you to become a more well-rounded and empathetic individual.”

Ryan Block: “I worked on a personal project (also honors project). A friend and I are making a documentary about homelessness in Akron. To do so we got to know several homeless individuals in Akron, bringing them food and loving them with Jesus' love. We talked with them, and many have expressed gratitude to us for just getting to know them. [This experience allowed me to] further understand the struggles that people face when they are on the streets and my mind has been changed/open to how these homeless people are humans too.”

Alia Baig: “I volunteered at Summa Hospital, and I was at the Emergency Department Visitors desk. I helped families who had questions about their family members in the ED and showed them to their rooms. I learned a lot from this experience about being calm in stressful situations

and working with people who were very preoccupied. Having a family member in the hospital, especially the Emergency Department, is difficult and it was my job to provide them with answers to their concerns as efficiently as possible.”