When I first arrived in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, I didn't know what to expect. When we walked off the plane, you could see hoards of people in the building above waiting for their family members to arrive. Everyone was dressed very nicely, while we all looked somewhat disgruntled after flying several hours to get there. Our guides managed to find us in the swarm of people, and huddled us into a corner of the airport to wait for everyone to get there. Once everyone was there, we walked outside into a very humid climate, and boarded our bus.

We had many guides, and they were all inspiring people. Hugo and Josué were our group leaders, Joaquin was our Contractor, and Jose Flores was our Security guard. We arrived at our compound and were met by army men holding AK-47’s, a precaution due to the possibility of dangerous people entering the compound. In America you don’t often see military personnel walking around the streets holding AK-47’s, but we soon were used to it. We drove to Guaricayan, the town that we would be working in, and instantly felt loved and welcomed. Almost everyone in our brigade could speak a little Spanish, and each day I tried my hardest to rarely use English. I ended up teaching Rosa, one of the women in the village of Guaricayan, some English words and in return she taught me some Spanish words, which was a very fun thing to look forward to each day.

The second day we finally started to work on the community bank for Guaricayan. We did house tours, and were able to see what their lives were like before and after Global Brigades began to help them. Global Brigades was responsible for diverting water from a local mountain stream to the small community, so that they could finally have clean running water. This water is stored in a tank that Global Brigades built, and gets sanitized by chlorine. Then came our part; building the community a bank so that they no longer need Global Brigades to function.

I have never done something that gave me so much pleasure while at the same time being the hardest and most strenuous thing that I have ever done. Working with the community, we were taught how to make adobe bricks using dirt, water, pine needles, and our feet. In the course of two days we made over 200 bricks, which was an incredible feat. After we made the bricks, we then stacked
them on top of each other and used lodo (mud) to hold them together. We didn’t have enough manpower or time to finish the bank, but we were able to get it to 70% completion, which should be finished by the next brigade coming in late August.

Interacting with the children and community members was incredible, and we were able to finish our week off with a cultural day in which we shared different games and songs from our cultures. Saying goodbye to the people of Guaricayán was very difficult, because we know that we may not get a chance to come back, however we have already made plans to go on another brigade with Global Brigades for two weeks in January, because the experience was such a positive and amazing one. I am so grateful for the Judith Lee Stronach Scholarship because it allowed me to go on this amazing trip and make bonds with people across the world, like Hugo and Josué. Without the scholarship I may not have been able to go on such an incredible journey, and I am forever grateful.