

# Student-Athlete Grew Personally, Spiritually on Mission Trip

*By Bethany Kozak, a sophomore pursuing a double major in Spanish, and kinesiology and sport science; she's on USD's women's cross country and track and field teams and also a member of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES).*

During winter break in 2015 I had the opportunity to go on a mission trip to Puerto Rico through Focus Missions Varsity Catholic. A few fellow athletes from the University of South Dakota joined with other athletes across the United States to help the children of Puerto Rico incorporate their faith through their sports.

The male athletes on the mission trip worked with younger boys in a baseball camp while the female athletes worked with younger girls in a volleyball camp (right). Each day of camp we spent five hours practicing various skillsets, playing small-sided games, and sharing testimonies with the athletes from Puerto Rico and fellow missionaries, so they could learn more about how faith has worked through our lives inside and outside of athletics.



It was on this mission trip that I had the opportunity to share my own testimony for the first time, which not only helped others learn more about me on a more personal level but helped me realize how Christ has and continues to work throughout my life. Each day, the other missionaries and I attended mass and spent time outside of camp with the people of Puerto Rico to learn more about their everyday life. (I'm standing in the dark-blue T-shirt, third from the right.)



From this experience in Puerto Rico, I gained a greater respect for another culture, grew in my own faith, practiced speaking in Spanish, and, most importantly, gained another family through Christ.

