

## Loving: Ada Lis and Community Debbie Lind

The people we met in Puerto Rico were remarkably loving and especially devoted to their families and church. During our time there we saw firsthand the love of family and community. We saw Ada Lis, our host, in our dorm at 4:30 a.m. preparing our daily breakfast. Well, maybe we didn't actually see her, but we either heard her preparing the meal or woke up to the spread she left in the kitchen before she scurried to her next task for the day -- always for the benefit of helping her people.



We saw the community come together as older men sat on one of the street corners of the town square playing dominoes sharing moments of friendship as they passed the time with one another, rather than staying isolated at home. Families also seem to do activities together more frequently with all members going together to watch children's events or groups walking to school. On the jobsites, homeowners showed us love and appreciation by fixing us lunch. You know they didn't have much but were so willing to share what they did have.

Johnny showed his love and thankfulness to our group after we sealed his roof by presenting us with a happy "Thanks"-giving cake. He was so

sweet telling us stories and sharing his cake, and having his picture taken with all the ladies.

At church we were warmly embraced within the community with hugs and kisses by everyone giving us such a welcoming feeling. On our last day the children's school prepared a fully cooked chicken dinner to say thank you. We had done nothing for the school but they had gotten the word we were in town. How touching! I got a lump in my throat the day we left.

Ada Lis marched out in the middle of the road put up her hands to stop traffic both ways while we made our exit hanging out windows waving good bye, and if you were in Dean's car you really held on. But not one motorist tooted their horn with impatience or flipped us off. It was another sweet moment.

Later sitting in the airport visiting with a fellow passenger, he described it this way—Families do everything together. If they need a loaf of bread, they all go to the grocery. When the kids go to school, everyone walks them. Once when a grandmother was at the airport to leave town, oh there was so much hugging, kissing, crying and carrying on. When the gentleman asked, "Well how long will grandmother be gone." The response was, "She'll be back in a week."

Puerto Rico has a beautiful loving culture that operates at a different pace. I'm glad I was able to see it.

