

# Vacations that Matter

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Word Divas

Summer is almost here, and along with its warm—OK, hot—weather and breaks from work and school comes the prospect of taking a vacation. A few years ago, when the gas crisis was at its peak, local chambers of commerce promoted the concept of a “stay-cation”—staying at home and exploring all the wonderful things to do on the Central Coast—a reasonable idea in tough economic times.

But have you ever considered combining time off from work with doing some good, either here in our own community—if you can’t afford to travel—or in another country, if you can? Could you spare a night or two to keep company with a few homeless families? What about doing relief and rebuilding in Haiti? Want a real adventure? How about a trip to Ecuador or Tanzania to teach hygiene and well drilling in under-developed villages? Not me, you say? I wouldn’t know how to.

Most of us have the desire to reach out to others, but never follow through due to lack of direction, or the false impression that only super-talented and experienced people are able to provide a helping hand to those who are less fortunate. Nothing could be further from the truth! Right here in our community are dozens of amazing organizations that are looking for volunteers to join them in making a difference around the world and at home. Might you be just a bit weary of the same-old, same-old summer? If so, give some thought to one of these alternatives:

Dr. Warren Frankel, founder of His Healing Hands, [www.hishealinghands.com](http://www.hishealinghands.com), a medical mission outreach, wanted to get the “spark” back in his career as a doctor and to give back to the country that has given so much to him. “We are called to be servants, not kings and queens,” he said, referencing his motivation for taking medical relief teams to underprivileged countries. After his first trip, he “got hooked--because it’s the right thing to do. People are really needy and appreciative.”

Teams consist of trained medical workers and support volunteers (who don’t have to have a medical background) willing to offer caring hearts and hands. For example, once an artist joined the team to keep the little kids occupied while they and their parents waited to be examined by the doctors and nurses. Typically, 1000 to 2000 people receive medical exams and treatment in the one- to two-week in-country stay. His Healing Hands teams go in God’s name ... to show His love through service. Often the teams are able to spend a few days sightseeing, so it truly can be a vacation as well as an outreach. Trips to Asia, Africa, and South America are currently in the planning stages.

Did you know that one of every eight people worldwide lacks safe drinking water? Lifewater International, [www.lifewater.org/volunteer](http://www.lifewater.org/volunteer), is dedicated to reducing that statistic, and you can be a part of that. Teams of field trainers and support volunteers travel to towns and villages in partnering countries to teach proper hygiene techniques, train them how to find water and drill wells, and eventually establish a well-drilling operation that provides sustainable income. Field trainers often use their personal vacation time to serve internationally. What a great way to see the world!

*Editor's note: The above article was written by the Word Divas, made up of Mary Weber, Jeannette Morris, Susan Gaddis, and Diane Ramirez with Morris taking the lead on this article.*