

# Juniata student shares experience with Southern Spanish classes

By TORI CUTSHALL  
SHC Reporter

If you ever have the opportunity to exchange e-mail with Larissa Hatch, you may note that her signature line includes a quote from Mahatma Gandhi stating, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

Taking this message to heart, Hatch doesn't just talk the talk, she walks the walk. Recently, she visited Christine Maxwell's Spanish classes at Southern Huntingdon County High School. She was eager to speak of her experiences in Guatemala City where she worked throughout the summer at Hogar Rafael Ayau, a Guatemalan orphanage.

As a student of nonprofit management at Juniata College with a secondary emphasis in Spanish, Hatch decided to take advantage of the opportunity to work behind the scenes at the orphanage. While there, she also enjoyed working directly with the children. When asked what surprised her most about her experience, Hatch responded that the children's ability to love and to trust after all they had been through was humbling. She went on to share that many of the children were from what she

referred to as the "trash district," had experienced broken homes, gang violence and abuse. Hatch's goal was to, "go in with an open heart and just love unconditionally." Although difficult, she says one must do his or her best to separate their own emotions. After all the children have been through, "They have seen enough sadness and pain so you have to encourage and smile, smile, smile!"

When asked if given the choice, would she repeat her experience? She replied, "In a heartbeat." It is Maxwell's hope that some of her students will soon have a similar experience. In previous years, her Spanish classes have raised money to donate to the Miguel Angel Asturias Academy, meeting the tuition needs of several students. Recently, Maxwell spent her summer months studying Spanish in Guatemala. While in Guatemala, she visited the Asturias Academy and saw firsthand the difference our support has made. She would like to arrange an opportunity for SHC students to experience education from the perspective of the Guatemalan children. After hosting so many guests and

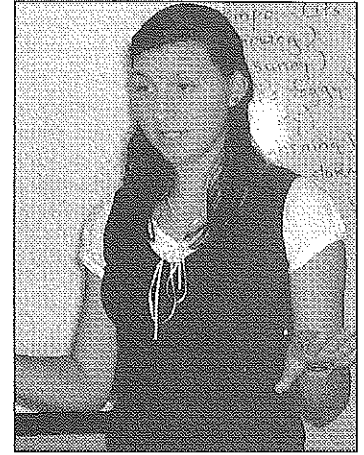


Photo by TORI CUTSHALL

**Larissa Hatch shares her experiences in Guatemala with the Spanish classes at SHCHS.**

speakers, it would be their turn to provide cultural enrichment for others.

As for Hatch, Maxwell said, "I believe she will be the change for those whose lives she touches. Her enthusiasm is truly inspiring. Students at Southern Huntingdon County will be raising funds to contribute to the children of Hogar Rafael Ayau. We would like to be a part of 'the change.'"