

## Service and Brigade Trips

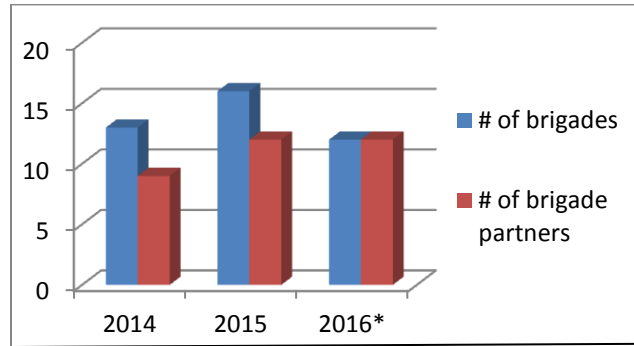
You could certainly say that our service and brigade trips are at the very heart of our mission of Shoulder to Shoulder. Our organization was founded by a single brigade trip from Cincinnati, OH to Santa Lucia, Intibucá. The brigade trips since have provided medical service, and other services, were little to nothing was available. They built our clinics. They built our school. But more importantly than all of that was that they established relationships and came to the appreciation of working shoulder to shoulder. In these relationships a synergy of purpose was created, allowing for that precious movement from the shame and despair of poverty to the dignity of human endeavor. It is this resource, our human resource, that we cannot do without. Even so today, when our budget has grown tremendously, and we anxiously concern ourselves with begging dollars to make payroll, we should never lose sight of the incalculable importance of one person meeting another with the intention of forming a just relationship.



But as human relationships are complicated, so too the planning and operating of a service team in a foreign country is grueling work. In 2015, we made a decision to contract out our brigade work to a travel agency. It seemed a good idea at the time, but we soon realized that what we lost was far more intrinsic to who we were than anything we might have gained. Our brigades felt disconnected from our organization. We transitioned to a brigade planning and execution team, all of whom live in Honduras and work for Shoulder to Shoulder. As a result, satisfaction has increased, expenses are reduced and the number of travelers is gradually increasing as we begin to recruit new institutions.

It is a joy to meet with the brigade team members who have come here for the first time. They appreciate something that it is only possible to appreciate with experience; that the most important part of life is not about one can gain, but rather about what one can give. Our brigades give a lot, but they gain a lot too. Transforming relationships of justice, service, and dignity are formed. It is such an incredible honor to be part of that.

## Brigade Report



\* 2016 figures are for presently scheduled brigades

Would you consider forming your own group brigade? Or signing up with an already existing one? Perhaps you might consider becoming a long-term volunteer. Yes, it will take a lot of work because import, life changing events take work. But it will be an experience never forgotten and always valued.