

We thought we would share with you, this month, about a school project we helped Carol's little cousin in North Carolina with. If you have never heard of Flat Stanley here is a brief background. "A bulletin board fell on Stanley and made him flat. While he was flat, Stanley had all sorts of adventures, including being mailed to visit relatives." The teacher encouraged each student to make Flat Stanley resemble themselves. We hope you enjoy Brooke's Flat Stanley experience, on a typical ride along day, with VOB Compassion.

*Love Wayne & Carol*



Hi friends, Guess where I am? Brooke sent me to visit her daddy's cousins in San Diego ,California. And you will never believe the adventure I had. I didn't just visit another state on the other side of our nation, I visited another country. You won't believe where!

Brooke's cousins have a ministry called 'Voice of the Bride,' or VOB. Among other things, they have compassion outreaches to Mexico. Did you know that San Diego is a border town with Tijuana Mexico? I will tell you more about that later. But as you can see from the top right photo, right now I am in the back of a huge flatbed truck, which carries food to people across the border. Of course, we all need food to live. But the folks who VOB help, live in a very poor country, and they **need help to provide for their families**. I had no idea how exciting this adventure would be. Just you wait and see!

On our first stop, we are at a large wholesale bakery, called Bread & Cie. They make lots of bread 24 hours a day, every day of the week, to provide for restaurants and grocery stores. They make so much bread that they have an abundance to share every single day. **Whole truck loads!**

Today, we packed all of the bread you see in those tall racks. We put it into brand new clean plastic bags, and loaded them on to the truck. It was hard work. Especially for someone my size! But it sure was worth it, knowing it was going to help people including kids, like you and me.



Next we went to grocery stores where they gave us many banana boxes filled with all kinds of stuff. We got more bread (if you can believe that), but also some good healthy foods. One of the problems in Mexico, is kids not getting **good nutritious food** like fruits and vegetables. The people are not starving like so many in other places such as Africa, but they do struggle with not getting a balanced meal 3 times a day to keep them healthy and strong.

So we got eggs, apples, oranges, lemons, bananas, lettuce, peppers and well, yeah even some broccoli! Also some good organic chicken and hamburger steaks. And you might see a few pies and donuts above too. That is always a treat for everyone!







Our next stop, took us to a place called Mama's Kitchen. That's a funny name, because it is not really like your, or my mama's kitchen. It is a HUGE kitchen where they prepare the largest pans of food I have ever seen. This kitchen provides food for people who are sick at home around San Diego, and **can not make food for themselves**. Each day they make little plastic trays of food (*you can see me standing on one*), and then have volunteers deliver the food to the people's homes. When they are finished filling all the trays, they share what they have left over, with VOB to take to people in Mexico. And let me tell you, this is good healthy food. They even have a professional chef!

Mama's Kitchen also has what they call, 'Mama's Pantry'. They put these huge red tubs in grocery stores, and people who shop there can donate cans, and boxes of food. They get so **much donated non-perishable food**, that they want to be sure it gets delivered right away. So we boxed up that good food right away, and loaded it on to the truck.



We also went to another organization in San Diego, who helps people with medical needs. They have doctors, nurses, dentists, and many more healthcare helpers. But, they also have a canned foods pantry, to help people with groceries. They had this **whole pallet of canned goods** from the food bank waiting for us on the back of a truck. I couldn't help but start to wonder, is this all gonna fit on that big white truck?



Ok can I just ask, who would throw away Pizza? Well, that is what would happen if we didn't stop by Pizza-Hut, and collect the pizza's no one showed up to buy. Boy, did they smell good. I can't wait to **give them to someone** who may not be able to afford buying take out pizza.



One of the last places we stopped for donated food, was Panera Bread. Hey! We have that restaurant right here in the Triad of North Carolina! Panera Bread makes it part of their **policy to share** all of their leftover bread and pastries every single night when they close. They have a baker who starts making fresh, new bread through the night, before they open again, the next day. We got this whole shopping cart of bread, and a box filled with sweets. Needless to say, I got a little too excited looking in and seeing all the M&M cookies, and I sort of fell into the box!







As I explained earlier, San Diego is on the border of Tijuana, Mexico. It is amazing that, just a short, 20 minute drive from one of America's finest cities, is a third world nation. What does it mean to be third world? Mostly, it describes countries which are still developing their resources, but due to the lack of money or tools to make things better, they remain under-developed. Because Mexico shares a border with the United States, there have always been various levels of trade agreements and border relations. Do you see the American and Mexican flag with me on the right?



The USA/Mexico border in San Diego/Tijuana is the **busiest border crossing in the world**, and the biggest border crossing in the western hemisphere. Around 50,000 vehicles and 25,000 pedestrians cross each day. We were one of those vehicles, but packed full of donated food. Didn't I tell you that the big white truck was getting full? I got lost in it for a bit.



As we drove across the border, the sign behind me in the photo left, explains the actual dividing line between the countries. It is a marker in both English, and Spanish. When we took that photo our truck was half in the US and half in Mexico. Wild huh? And if you look behind me, you will see the "wall" or border fence that you may have heard about in recent news.



There were a lot of cars going into Mexico. It is amazing to wonder what each person is doing. I knew that we had an important mission. As you drive in, you have to wait for a green light to permit you to pass in. If you get a red light, your car has to be inspected. We already knew that we had to drive into the Mexican customs area to declare the truck load of items we were bringing into Mexico. They call this process, 'importing'. That's is a fancy word for taking something of significant value, across an international border. Next, we waited for the Mexican agent in the photo below to come over and approve of what we had on our truck. I thought, '**how could he not approve?**' I knew it was food that was going to go to a lot of people who needed it.



Even after our truck load of food got approved and we paid an import tax, we then had to drive our truck through a humongous X Ray machine. You know, like when a doctor takes photos of your body to see your bones! The customs official has to make sure that everything on our truck is safe for entering their country, which is a good thing. One thing for sure I knew, they were not going to find anything in my pockets. I wonder if my flat body will even show up on the X Ray?







Finally we made it into Tijuana, Mexico. It is a beautiful country with lots of colorful houses. Many are very small, or very old, but still a place folks call home. And all of a sudden I realized, my Spanish is not so bueno! All of the road signs were in a different language, and nice folks were speaking in a language I couldn't understand. But as we distributed the food and met person after person, I realized that human language

goes  
beyond  
words.

Smiles, and warm thankful hearts, were easy to understand. Here are some of the nice people we shared food with: Veronica's family has endured great hardships, but she remains hopeful. I learned that Brooke's cousin has known her for many years, since her daughter Jasmin in the photo with her (top right) was a young girl. Even now, they are sponsoring her to attend college. She is very smart, and will be a strong young woman to help her community.

These dear elderly folks are my new friends Amelia, Maurie, and Jose.



We stopped at many places to drop off bags and boxes of food. We went to homes for the elderly, shelters for people who needed medical help, churches, and a few more family homes. We also delivered to an orphanage, where there were so many kids like you and me. They are not able to be with their moms and dads, but have a nice place where they are taken good care of. Brooke's cousin knows this because he has been going there for many, many years. He even knows some of the kids who now are adults, and are helping work at the orphanage!

It was amazing to see how quickly the food we collected in San Diego was distributed. Before I knew it, that white truck that I was not sure would hold everything, was once again empty, and we were making our way back to the border to return to San Diego. And guess what? The next day it was time to do it all over again! It was a good feeling to see food go to people who appreciated it, instead of it being wasted. What an experience! You should do a ride along too sometime!

