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Coloring Outside the Lines

BY: ANDREW CALZADILLA

I'm not a good painter. Never have been. Never will be. I was the kid in the third grade that made a *C* in art. It wasn't just that I couldn't draw or didn't have talent. I was even having problems with simple tasks such as staying in the lines and realizing that green doesn't match with purple. It was comical how bad my artwork was. My family had a tradition of putting up important or interesting facts on the refrigerator. In an act of boldness, I placed one of my "drawings" from art class on the refrigerator. The image stayed up for one evening but was mysteriously removed. I hadn't even made it up on the fridge in my own house!

Fast forward to the summer of 2010.

I was faced with a challenge. I was in the midst of a Medical Mission trip to Ecuador with my medical school. Thus far the trip had been a great success. I was practicing my broken Spanish with moderate success. The food was cheap plus we were learning a lot about the culture and the health care. We ventured far from the metropolis that is Quito into one of the most rustic areas of the country called Santo Domingo. It was here that I was faced with the request of painting a mural for the students of the Julio Jaramillo School. I hadn't actually drawn or painted anything since grade school, and even those paintings were not anything to write home about. But, I knew that this was something that was going to be worthwhile and memorable. Instead of taking on this event as only a medical school student / America Yankee project we felt we should incorporate the students of the school. At first

only a handful of younger students were out helping us draw and paint. By the end of the afternoon we had about thirty students outside assisting and placing their hand prints on the wall. It gave the painting a unique wholeness that would not have been there had the Medical Students painted alone. Everyone served a purpose. Some people mixed paint well, some drew well from pictures. Some students only provided height and the ability to paint the highest point on the wall. But we all worked together, even with a language barrier, to make a wonderful painting that should last for years and

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years. I had to overcome my personal battles with art class and realized now why we took those classes as students. It's not the quality of the art that is important. What's important are the emotions the art evokes in the viewer. And the smiles on the children faces were enough to tell me that I had finally earned my *A* in art class. Well, maybe an *A* minus, but who's counting?