Trip Information Packet

Panama

Jesuit NOLA

May 27– June 5

Welcome to Courts for Kids. Most likely, this is your first trip with our organization and we are confident that this trip will impact you in ways you cannot even imagine. We work closely with our in-country partner to make sure your basic needs are met, so we can all focus on the task at hand, creating a multi-purpose sports court with the initiative, help and support of the community.

A sports court is a great project because it requires the help of many community members, provides plenty of work for everyone, and becomes an asset that provides not only safe places for children to play, but also various other benefits. The hard work of our team will be a great bridge between us and the community and we will develop a mutual respect that will help provide inroads into a rich cross-cultural experience and first-hand insight into a developing world community.

We are looking for great cultural ambassadors, so please only sign up for this trip if you are willing to step outside of your comfort zone. You will need to work hard, you will be eating different foods, sleeping and bathing in less comfortable environments. But, as they say, if you want to live like you're in America, why leave?

Most importantly, we ask that you enter into this with a great sense of humility. We want you to be eager to learn and grow in this process as we are entering into a different culture with different values and norms. We want you be quick to listen and slow to speak.

We will not be giving you a detailed itinerary as things are very prone to change with this sort of construction project. But your time will be spent working on the court, taking part in various cultural activities and, most importantly, connecting with the locals.

Please look through this informational packet and feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.

If you choose to go, I can almost guarantee you will look back on this trip as a life-changing experience. You will grow so much in a week it will make you wish you could stay longer. In fact, you will probably say this was the best week of your year.

Hope you can come!

Derek Nesland
President
Courts for Kids

Community Information

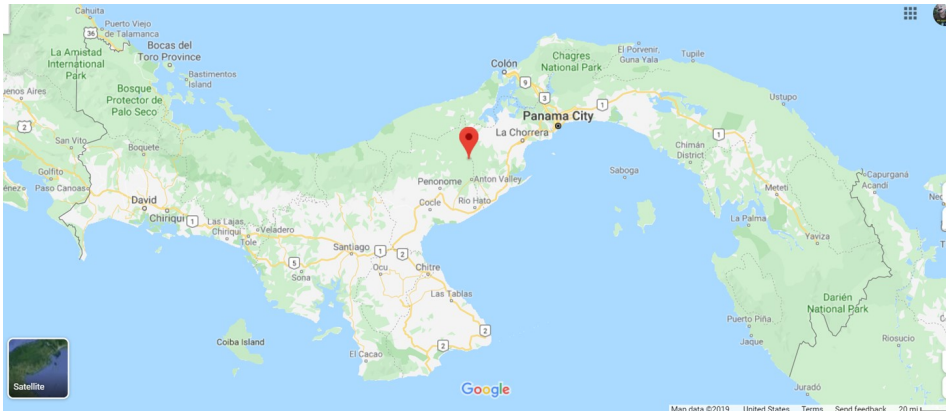
Bocas de Las Minas is located on the eastern side of the Cocle Province of Panama. It belongs to the corregimiento Chiguiri Arriba, district of Penonome. Bocas de Las Minas is a small, rural community consisting of around 600 people and 100 houses. It has one school with 172 students, meaning about 30% of the community are children (and this percentage is growing). The community's claim to fame is their production of culantro (relative of cilantro) at a commercial level. Every family cultivates culantro and depends on it as their main source of income: it is truly the identity of the community. Every night they send an average of 1,600 pounds of culantro to the central market in Panama City to sell.

Harvesting culantro

Before, access to the community was nearly impossible by car, but as of 2016, a government project built a new asphalt road and multiple bridges to the community, making coming and going much easier. Because of this road, there has been rapid development in the community. For example, wood houses with palm roofs are being replaced by cement homes with tin roofs. The new road however, also destroyed the old playing surface as the machines used to construct it completely ruined the level dirt field and goals. A big pressing need in the community is a safe space for kids to use both during school hours and after. The current field has many ditches, scattered glass, and dangerous rocks in which I have seen many people injured on. This area was, and still is, the most popular area for kids to play pick-up soccer as it is located conveniently in the middle of the community. Another option for local children is a much bigger, full-size grass field that is used on Wednesdays and Sundays by the older kids. This field isn't great for its location, is unusable during the rainy season, and also used by horses and cows to graze. Therefore, a multiuse court for soccer, volleyball, and basketball is greatly needed and anticipated in this community.

Our group will be met at the airport by the Courts for Kids Panama Country Director who lives in Panama and has been working closely with the community to plan all aspects of your visit. We will be staying in a community building sleeping on mattresses on the floor. The court will also be built at the school and will be used by the entire community. Many times it will be a place where the community will gather to dance and hold celebrations and ceremonies. We will work side-by-side with the locals and although it will be challenging there are jobs for everyone of every physical capacity. During the whole trip we will be fully immersed in the local culture eating authentic food, learning local traditions, customs, and way of life. It is important to note that this court will be built *with* the community not *for* the community. The community members are very motivated to make their court a reality and from the beginning, they have been the driving factor planning this project to see it come to fruition.

*More specific lodging, packing, and trip logistics will be provided as the departure date gets closer.
**Please note, the destination community is subject to change at the discretion of Courts for Kids in order to best meet the needs and safety of the volunteer group as well as the needs of the host community.



Bocas de las Minas on a map

Current field where kids play and the church

Trip Safety

Courts for Kids makes your safety our number one priority. Being in a safe, tight knit community with strong awareness and ownership of the project will provide local people who will be personally invested in the safety of the team. Courts for Kids also has safety protocols in place that include, but are not limited to:

- A **Courts for Kids representative will lead the group** while in the destination country.
- We always contract **private transportation** to pick up and return the group to the in-country airport**.**
- We have a **strict behavior and conduct policy** for all trip participants which promotes the safety and security of the group. All participants are required to attend a **mandatory training**.
- We have **secure transportation** available to medical facilities in the case of any injuries.
- We will have a **first aid kit** with the group at all times.
- We only drink **clean, potable water**.
- We work with community cooks to adhere to our **Safe Cooking Practices.**
- We monitor the **US State Department** travel warnings and make travel adjustments as deemed necessary.
- We require all volunteers to be disconnected for the entirety of the trip.
- **Insurance coverage** for all trip participants that includes evacuation with a medical escort in a worst case situation. Policy details can be provided upon request.
- **A Child Protection Policy** which includes background checks for all adults traveling in a group where minors are present.
- Courts for Kids may conduct a **behavioral background check** through a student's school and reserves the right to refuse a participant based on the information we receive.

Safety is a team effort and every trip participant is responsible for their behavior, must use common sense while traveling, and comply with Courts for Kids representatives and trip leaders at all times.

2022 COVID Policies

- All participants must be fully vaccinated with an authorized and/or recommended COVID-19 vaccine by the U.S. Center for Disease Control (Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson), including required boosters and must submit documentation of the vaccine to Courts for Kids at least one month prior to departure date. Failure to provide proof of vaccination by the deadline results in forfeiting your spot with no refund.

- Currently the State Department (at time of publication– October, 2021) requires a negative COVID test to return to the US. If this policy is still in place one month prior to departure you will be charged an additional $125 to cover testing and an additional insurance policy that will cover all expenses if your son/daughter/yourself were to test positive and need to quarantine.

- If a student were to test positive and need to quarantine in host country, a Quarantine Chaperone will stay with the student until they produce a negative test and can return to the US. The additional insurance taken out will cover all expenses if this were to occur.

- Each volunteer will abide by the rules and recommendations of the host country with regards to COVID-19 safety (e.g., in regard to mask wearing, social distancing, etc.), in addition to the latest recommendations for vaccinated international travelers issued by the Center for Disease Control.

- CFK will consider travel to countries identified as "Level 4" by the U.S. Department of State, provided that such level is the result of possible COVID-19 concerns. CFK will not travel to countries identified as "Level 4" due to "crime or violent activity".

Funding Responsibilities

Everyone in your group will contribute to the total project costs.
Each participant will be required to fundraise/donate this amount:

$2,200

(An additional $125 may be applied if COVID testing and insurance will be required, this will be collected separately– one month before the trip)
100% of all donations are fully tax deductible

All funds raised are applied to court construction costs and the following group expenses:

- Round trip airfare (award points cannot be used)
- In-country costs (food, water, lodging, and transportation)
- Entrance/exit fees
- Emergency medical insurance
- Special activities
- Court construction costs (in addition to your giving, the host community also contributes making this court a reality).

Does <u>not</u> include: passport, immunizations, travel to and from the US airport, food or incidental costs on layovers and delays, or spending money for souvenirs.

***All donations are non-refundable** (unless the entire project is canceled by Courts for Kids, funds will be refunded less non-recoverable costs)**.** If you raise/donate more than the above amount, you can choose to apply the excess to passport or immunization costs (must submit receipts), the court construction costs, sports equipment, toward the balance of another trip participant or towards Courts for Kids in general. You will not be eligible for any other refunds or reimbursements due to IRS regulations.*

Scholarship Opportunities

Courts for Kids is committed to providing opportunities for every student, regardless of income. If you are facing financial hardship and/or qualify for free/reduced lunch in the school district in which you live (regardless of what school you go to), we encourage you to apply to our program.

If awarded a Courts for Kids scholarship half of your trip costs will be covered and you will be expected to fundraise the other half.

Information and Applications for Scholarships can be found on our website at:

https://www.courtsforkids.org/scholarships/

The participant must apply for a scholarship BEFORE registering for the trip or within the first month of registering for the trip.

A special thank you to all the Courts for Kids donors who have made this scholarship fund possible.

Trip Checklist

1.Registration: Register online at https://www.courtsforkids.org/upcoming/
Spots are reserved to the first 23 participants to turn in registration and deposit of $350 and pass a behavioral background check from the school.

2. **Passport:** Make sure you have a passport that will not expire before **December 5th, 2022.** If you need a passport, go to the nearest post office for assistance. **In order to avoid the headache and stress, make sure you get your passport on time, do it ASAP.**

3. **Fundraising deadlines**:

- **Deposit of $350 when registering**
- **1st amount of $600 by February 15th, 2022**
- **2nd amount of $600 by March 31st, 2022**
- **3rd amount of $650 by April 30th, 2022**
- **Amount for testing and insurance (if testing is required for reentry)- $125 by April 30th, 2022**

** All donations are non-refundable unless the entire project is canceled by Courts for Kids, in which case funds will be refunded minus unrecoverable costs.*

3. **Vaccinations:** The recommended vaccinations for travel to Panama according to the Center for Disease Control are the following (**keep in mind these are recommended, not required. Check with your local doctor and make the decision best for you**):

a.Routine (DPT, MMR, Polio)—all travelers
b.Hepatitis A and Typhoid—most travelers
c. Hepatitis B, Yellow Fever, and Malaria—some travelers
d. COVID-19 Vaccine– REQUIRED for participation

4. Attend **mandatory** Courts for Kids pre-trip training sometime in April, TBD**.** A parent/guardian will be required to attend the training.

Flight Itinerary

United Flight Itinerary*
(Award points cannot be used)

Date	Fl. #	Airport	Dep.	Airport	Arrival
May 27	2648	New Orleans	9:45 am	Houston	11:05am
May 27	1034	Houston	2:23 pm	Panama City	6:35 pm
June 5	1033	Panama City	3:30 pm	Houston	7:54 pm
June 5	1659	Houston	9:30 pm	New Orleans	10:45 pm

You are eligible for frequent flier miles on United. To enroll go to www.united.com
*Flights and carrier are subject to change

Fundraising Help

Online Appeal

· **Personal Fundraising Page:** Upon registration, you will receive a personal fundraising page and an email with instructions on how to customize it. Come up with a list of friends and family members to send it to. Once somebody donates, it will show up immediately in your registration page.

•**Facebook/Instagram Fundraisers**:

- Anyone can create a fundraiser on Facebook or Instagram, including your family members; however, fundraisers must follow the rules outlined below. When fundraisers are created correctly, Courts for Kids will directly receive the funds you raise and we will credit 100% of the donations towards your trip fundraising responsibilities.

Rules for Fundraising on Facebook and Instagram

Fundraiser 'titles' (on Facebook) and the text of 'donation stickers' (on Instagram) MUST include the trip participant's first and last name or donations received through this fundraiser will NOT be able to be credited to your trip costs.

Examples:

- **ACCEPTABLE**: *'John Smith's summer Xavier HS trip to Nicaragua fundraiser'* - Created by John Grandmother
- **NOT ACCEPTABLE:** *'Fundraiser for my summer Xavier trip to Nicaragua'* - created by John Smith

Fundraisers must be created for Courts for Kids, not for yourself. When creating a fundraiser, choose Courts for Kids under the 'Nonprofit' section, do not choose the option to raise money for 'Yourself' or 'For a Friend.'

Support Letters

- Come up with a list of friends and family members who might support you on this trip. Don't rule people out too quickly. You will be very surprised at who will support you. Get their addresses.
- Type up a support letter for people to make a tax-deductible donation on your behalf (use the sample on the next page for an idea).
- Send the letter, pledge card and a return-addressed envelope (to your house) to everyone on your list.

IMPORTANT- Get this letter out ASAP to make sure you get your support raised in time.

- Make sure people give you checks made out to Courts for Kids. When you receive a check, make sure and send them a thank you card. Next send the check **and the response card** to Courts for Kids.

Other ideas

- If applicable, see if your home church, service club, or other organization will sponsor you.
- Do a game night, movie night, adult prom, Zumba-thon, Bunco party or another fun event and sell tickets.
- Solicit donations you can sell in a garage sale, silent auction, online auction, or raffle.
- Make a craft, shirt, or food item that you can sell.
- Some companies have donation matching programs and will match donations employees make to nonprofits such as Courts for Kids. You can check if a company has a donation matching program here: http://www.matchinggifts.com/search/rit
- Be creative, go online– there are many fundraising ideas out there!

(IT IS BEST TO REWRITE THIS LETTER ADDING YOUR OWN WORDS TO GIVE IT A PERSONAL TOUCH. USE THE FOLLOWING AS A GUIDE)

Today's Date

Dear *(personalize it by adding their name here),*

I am excited to share with you about an upcoming service project in *{insert country}* this upcoming *{month of trip}* through Courts for Kids. I need to raise *{amount needed to raise}* in order to participate so I am asking friends and family members to consider helping out with a tax-deductible contribution.

We will travel to *{insert country}* and make our way to *{insert a couple sentences of community information from the site details page of the packet}.* This community applied to Courts for Kids for assistance in building a multi-use athletic court, which is where I come in. I want to help make this vision a reality for the community but need some help. I am raising money not only for travel costs but also for construction materials, as well.

Our primary project will be to build this court, but we will also take part in other service and cultural learning activities as well. Our primary purpose for going is to serve the local community, but also to grow and learn as we get out of our comfort zone. We will be staying in relatively primitive conditions within the community and will be eating the local food the entire time. This is definitely not a touristy trip, but I am excited for the change I am sure will happen in my life and the impact we can have.

{If you have the space, enter a personal story of why this trip is significant for you)

Would you consider supporting me as well as the local community in this project? I need to raise *{amount needed to raise}* for this trip to be possible. If you are interested, please make a check out to **Courts for Kids** and return it in the enclosed envelope. Could you please return this envelope as soon as possible in order to make sure I hand everything in with enough time to spare? You donation is **tax-deductible** and **100%** of what you give will go directly to this trip.

Sincerely,

{Your signature and name}

o Yes, I would like to support _____ on the Jesuit Panama project in the amount of:

_____ $500
_____ $200
_____ $100
_____$50
_____ $25
_____ other amount

o Please write your email to the right if you want your donation receipt e-mailed to you to help us save costs and resources.

Name_____
Address_____
_____
City_____State____
Zip Code_____
Phone Number _____
Email _____

Please make your **tax-deductible** contribution out to **Courts for Kids,** and return using the return-addressed envelope as soon as possible.

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Phone Number _____
Email _____

Please make your **tax-deductible** contribution out to **Courts for Kids,** and return using the return-addressed envelope as soon as possible.

Questions?

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