

MISSION LAZARUS | ACU's vision to become the premier university for the education of Christ-centered, global leaders (see pages 10-16) means producing more graduates such as Jarrod Brown ('00), whose ministry in Honduras is profiled here.



STORY BY TAMARA THOMPSON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RONNIE RUIZ

JARROD APPLE- SEED

Businessman-turned-missionary Jarrod Brown spreads hope and the gospel to Hondurans at Mission Lazarus

Everyone knew about Jarrod Brown's get-rich dream. After all, he considered it his calling.

"They kept talking about finding your calling at ACU in my business classes and I couldn't really understand that idea, except that mine was to ... be a successful businessman," Brown said.

"Most everyone was aware of that," Dr. Foy Mills, chair of the ACU Department of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, said chuckling. "He had very strong ideas that, as quickly as possible, he wanted to earn a million dollars."

Since Jarrod was young, Bill Brown had groomed his son to be an international businessman, sending him to study for a semester each in Madrid, Buenos Aires and Oxford, and encouraging him to incorporate Spanish into his studies. After taking classes taught in Spanish at the University of Buenos Aires, Brown hiked solo throughout South America for two months to gain a better understanding of the various Spanish cultures.

In 2000, Brown graduated from ACU with bachelor's degrees in Spanish and international business and landed a high-paying job as a consultant in the Latin America department of Universal Computer Systems in Houston. He was on his way to achieving his goal to make his first million by age 30.

"I was getting to see a lot of places, traveling all over the

FAR LEFT: Allison and Jarrod Brown and their children, Levi and Soledad. LEFT: Jarrod opens the gate to a cultivated field near Choluteca.



place and spending a ton of money ... and I just wasn't fulfilled," said Brown.

Perhaps looking for that fulfillment, he joined a missions trip to Honduras during Thanksgiving 2001. There in the southern city of Choluteca, Brown discovered that his business management skills could help resolve a church construction venture that had run aground, but it would take time. He came home to the U.S., quit his job, and returned to Honduras, planning to spend a year there.

"The defining moment was seeing a need in the mission field [where] my business training from ACU could be a valuable asset for the Lord's kingdom, rather than just for my pocketbook. I was only supposed to be there for one year," Brown said.

Interrupting his quest for wealth, Brown encountered extreme poverty in the Latin American country where 44 percent of the people live on less than \$2 a day. He unexpectedly fell in love with an area that barely rates a mention in any travel book because it's extremely hot, dirty, and lacking in infrastructure, but where the people, despite those conditions, are receptive to the Word. "I let my guard down and the Holy Spirit grabbed hold of my heart," he said. "And I have been there ever since."

Today, Brown is the president and co-founder (with wife Allison) of Mission Lazarus, an expansive Christian mission in Southern Honduras. Taking a holistic approach to ministry, Mission Lazarus focuses on primary education and skill development, medical aid and health education, agricultural development, and, throughout all of these, the preaching and teaching of God's Word.

DEADLY DESTRUCTION

When Brown first arrived in Honduras, the country was still reeling from the effects of Hurricane Mitch. The second deadliest hurricane on record, Mitch swept through the small nation in October 1998, killing an

estimated 7,000, with thousands more missing. Although Mitch struck 10 nations before dying out, Honduras received most of his wrath. The Honduran president claimed that Mitch destroyed 50 years of progress in the country.

The infrastructure of the nation suffered enormously, with 70-80 percent of the transportation system wiped out, including most bridges and secondary roads. Because of the extensive damage, maps of the country became instantly obsolete. Flooding destroyed an estimated 70 percent of all crops. Large numbers of animals were lost as well, including 50,000 cattle, 60 percent of the poultry



population, and nearly all shrimp production.

Flooding and mudslides wiped out entire villages. About 1.5 million people, 20 percent of the country's population, were left homeless. Without food, disease spread and starvation was rampant.

Mitch struck the city of Choluteca, population 100,000, the hardest that October. Thirty-six inches of rain fell in the town, equivalent to 212 days of average rainfall during a normal year. Choluteca had only one small Church of Christ at the time, but it managed to head up a humanitarian effort with aid sent by U.S. Churches of Christ before any other organization. Refugees flocked to Limon de la Cerca, on the outskirts of Choluteca. The Church of Christ became the first organization to build refugee housing there.

"That natural disaster opened the door for God's Word to be preached to people who had lost everything. But they saw they had hope through Christianity," Brown said.

By the end of 1999 a new church was under construction to reach the refugee population in Limon. When Brown arrived in Choluteca nearly a year later, the construction had hit major snags with funding and cost overruns. He took over as project manager and supervised the building's completion.

In addition, Brown used his management expertise to help a medical clinic that had been built in Choluteca following Hurricane Mitch. He instituted an inventory system for the medications, set up an accounting system and established a board of directors. By the end of the year, the clinic was running smoothly.

Just before he was scheduled to return home, Brown discovered a problem that portended a potential disaster. Children kept coming to the clinic with arms and legs broken in falls from 60-foot-high mango trees. They had been looking for food, because none was to be had at home. Two consecutive droughts had left the

farmers in rural mountain villages without any seed to grow their crops, and because they lived off the land, their families were going hungry.

Working with two relief organizations, Brown purchased 100,000 pounds of beans, sorghum and corn seed and 80,000 pounds of fertilizer and began distributing them to farmers. "We printed some little flyers [saying] this was free, because God loves you and He cares about you," Brown said. "The response was overwhelming. I'd never been up into the mountain villages. I had no idea these vast mountains of jungle and forest were dotted with all these little villages. And when we told them we cared about them and we weren't politicians wanting something - we just wanted to give to them - they were just starving for us to come back and study the Bible with them."

About the same time as the seed project,



FROM LEFT: Jarrod works on a to-do list for the coming day; the church building where Brown and his family worship; older boys are taught carpentry skills in the shop containing tools from ACU's former Department of Industrial Technology; workers weed the new corn crop developed with help from ACU's Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences; and patients wait outside the medical clinic to receive treatment.

BELOW: Jarrod visits with a patient outside the clinic, and works to help prepare the orphanage.

Honduran government officials approached Brown and a couple of local ministers to ask if they were interested in running two schools the government could no longer operate.

"It seemed like such a great way for the church to outreach into the community, again, just using what we learned through the seed project, just showing people we love them," Brown said.

Realizing his time in Honduras could not end at that point, Brown returned to his hometown of Nashville, Tenn., to garner support as a missionary. His dream of becoming rich now seemed absurd in light of the need he had encountered in Honduras, and it no longer occupied his thoughts. Returning to Choluteca with support from a sponsoring congregation, he focused all his energy on developing ways to help Hondurans.

Initially, Brown was the only North American working in the Choluteca area. Wanting to reach out more to the mountain villagers, Brown traveled over the narrow, rugged mountain roads in his four-wheel-drive pick-up equipped with a microphone and loud speaker. He stopped in the rural villages, hopped into the bed of his truck and began preaching. People crowded around him to listen.

"We had a lot of baptisms, really awesome experiences in jungle streams and springs. We had really great reports to send back to the U.S., really great pictures," Brown said. "But the Lord helped me to realize it wasn't sustainable church growth. It was church growth because people came to see this gringo who spoke Spanish and had a four-door truck.

"I thank the Lord for helping me see it wasn't sustainable church growth, that there are plenty of men and women in Honduras capable of spreading God's Word. They just needed resources to reach out to their people."

It would be three years before Mission Lazarus – named for the poor man who was spiritually rich in Jesus' parable – would become an official humanitarian organization. But Brown decided early on that his philosophy would be to use his skills and resources to

empower Hondurans to run their own ministries and programs. Unlike many missions, a major goal of Mission Lazarus would be to have Honduran churches serve as the face of its programs. As a result, Hondurans propose project ideas they believe would provide good outreach in their communities, and work with Brown to implement them.

"We won't do everything for them. To start a project they have to be ready to put together a business plan of what they want to do," Brown said. "We didn't want to be, as Americans, doing everything and, quite frankly, messing it up. ... I can live in Honduras a long time, but there are always going to be little things I don't understand about the culture."

So with Brown working closely with Honduran churches, the ministries of soon-to-be Mission Lazarus started to take shape, beginning with education.

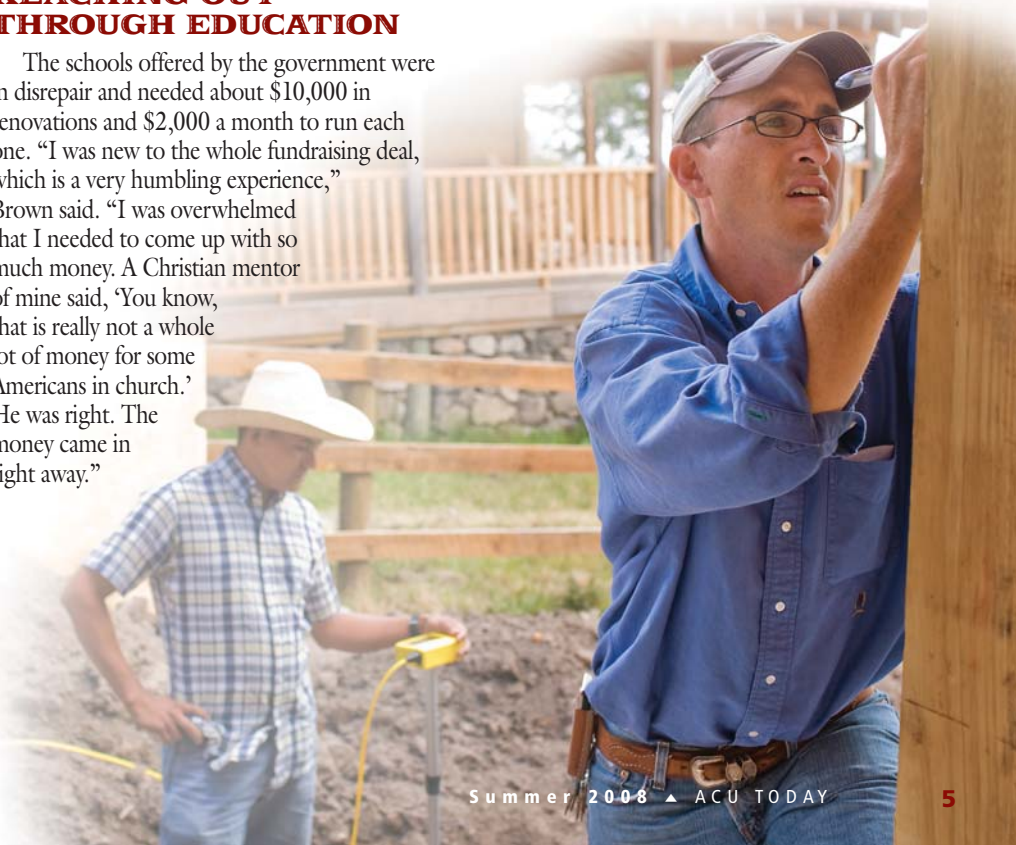
REACHING OUT THROUGH EDUCATION

The schools offered by the government were in disrepair and needed about \$10,000 in renovations and \$2,000 a month to run each one. "I was new to the whole fundraising deal, which is a very humbling experience," Brown said. "I was overwhelmed that I needed to come up with so much money. A Christian mentor of mine said, 'You know, that is really not a whole lot of money for some Americans in church.' He was right. The money came in right away."

The first private school, located near the church he had moved there to build, re-opened in 2002, and the second school opened the following year, both in Limon de la Cerca, where Mitch refugees – the poorest of the poor – lived. Children at the schools started attending the church, bringing parents and grandparents. Within a few years of the schools opening, the church had grown from just 80 to 500 in attendance.

In 2005 a larger school, also provided by the government, opened in San Marcos de Colón, about 45 minutes northeast of Choluteca. A year after the school opened there, the San Marcos congregation had more than doubled in size and had to build a new church facility. This year Mission Lazarus opened schools in Duyure, northeast of Choluteca, and Monjarás, southwest of Choluteca.

Each school, or early childhood development center, has up to 150 students ranging





in age from 3 to 10, a director, five teachers, two cooks and two guards. Students are invited to enroll in the private school, not because they are economically advantaged, as in the United States, but because they are the poorest of the poor. Teachers interview families in the community to find those in greatest need. Parents pay 50 cents per month per child, and the schools provide all the supplies, the uniforms and two meals a day. Brown says the 50 cents is symbolic, so that parents will have something invested in the education.

“There’s no obligation whatsoever. There’s no ‘We want your child at church every Sunday’ or ‘We want you to come once a month,’” Brown said. “No, [the message is] ‘We love you because God loves us, so we want you to have this. We care about you.’ I think that has had a major impact on people.”

A majority of the students come from single-parent homes with many siblings. The schools fill a void, not just educationally, but emotionally, for those youngsters who need acceptance and freedom from abuse, which often occurs in Honduran families, Brown said.

When children graduate from the school, they might go on to a public or even a private school. However, in Honduras, vocational education is more valuable than a college education to an adult. So in 2003, a carpentry school was started to teach older boys a trade skill. In 2005 when ACU closed its Department of Industrial Technology, the university donated the department’s equipment to Mission Lazarus.

“The machine tools they had been using were unsafe, with exposed wiring, unguarded blades,” said Dr. Jim Cooke (’73), professor of agricultural and environmental sciences and former chair of the industrial technology

department. Cooke served a 10-week sabbatical in San Marcos to help set up the carpentry shop with tools from the university department he once led back in Abilene.

Cooke also spent several weeks working on the curriculum for the school with the teacher. Ninety percent of the equipment in the school came from ACU, Brown says, and now the students make “really fine furniture.” The students also participate in daily Bible classes.

Girls and single mothers may attend vocational sewing schools to learn how to become seamstresses. Because every school in Honduras requires students to wear a uniform, there is a demand for seamstresses.

“The cheapest way to get a uniform is from your neighborhood seamstress, not from the store. So there’s plenty of money to be made by a seamstress to supplement her family,” Brown said.

The three sewing schools, which are open to the public, also include a daily Bible study as part of the curriculum. Graduates receive a new foot-powered sewing machine, because many families have no electricity in their homes.

Each February, Mission Lazarus begins offering classes at the Christian Leader Training Center for men and women who want to become more active church leaders. The program requires they devote 12 hours on two Saturdays a month for two years.

Students may be schoolteachers who want to improve their education; mountain villagers whose family commitments and financial standing prevent them from going to a seminary; people interested in planting churches; and those who want to be feel equipped to share their faith more effectively. Area preachers donate their time to teach at the center, which is based in a downtown Choluteca church.



LOVE AND MEDICINE

Since Hurricane Mitch, medical brigades – teams of doctors and nurses who provide medical attention for a week or two – frequently visit Honduras. In July 2002, one such brigade changed Brown’s life and work forever. The group of workers from Tennessee, Ohio and Colorado included a young registered nurse named Allison Thweatt, who was finishing up a master’s degree in nursing and nurse practitioner certification at Vanderbilt University.

For the two weeks the brigade visited Honduras, Jarrod and Allison said little to each other. On the two-hour trip to the airport for her return flight to the states, the two struck up a conversation that ended in exchanging email addresses. Over the next six weeks, the emails flew back and forth between Honduras and Tennessee. On Labor Day weekend, Jarrod flew to Nashville and proposed to her. They married the following February, and Allison became an important part of the missions team.

As a result of the seed project in 2001, a church had started in the mountain village of Las Pitás. Brown had become aware of how isolated the villagers were, especially from medical assistance. Although he had helped get the clinic running smoothly in Choluteca, it had since closed, and Brown felt he lacked the medical expertise to open a new one elsewhere.

“It was really awesome how the Lord blessed me with a wife who is a nurse practitioner,” Brown said. Two months after their wedding, they opened a clinic in the mountain jungles near Las Pitás. First operating out of a church member’s home, the clinic moved into a newly constructed facility by late fall. Not even a year out of college and with limited Spanish skills, Allison became the clinic’s director.

“I had no idea what we were doing opening a clinic,” Allison said. “You really do have to jump in with both feet and get out there to really develop real skills. I think the clinic helped me to develop a vocabulary in that I was able to speak well in my work setting much sooner



FROM LEFT: The Browns ride horses on a Sunday afternoon; children enjoy the love and attention Mission Lazarus brings to their village; Brown supervises the construction of a building; bricks for construction are made locally; stewardship for their ministry requires creative planning for Seth Dagget and Brown.
BELOW: Jarrod stays in touch with North American supporters by email, and walks through corn fields that are now thriving with help from agronomy experts on ACU's faculty.

than I was to speak well in a social setting or at church interacting with people.”

Just as Allison enhanced the mission – and Jarrod’s life – the clinic added a new dimension to the mission’s ministry. Allison and Jarrod quickly found a staff and some equipment to stock the clinic. Visitors could now get care from a Honduran doctor and nurse, and medications from a Honduran pharmacist. While waiting for treatment, patients can participate in a morning devotional or seek counsel from a full-time evangelist. Much like the seed project, the clinic, which is an outreach of the Las Pitras church, is used to tell people of God’s love.

“There’s no pressure if you want to talk, need some advice, need someone to pray with; he’s here,” Brown said. “The job of the evangelist at the clinic is really the job of planting seeds . . . We have people who walk for two days from the Nicaraguan border to get medical treatment. They walk for four or five hours to get there early in the morning. They hear God’s Word and they’re like a bird carrying that seed off.

The evangelist never knows where that seed ends up, never knows if that seed sprouts or not. We believe our call here is to plant the seed.”

Brown says this approach differs from other missions that may require people in need to profess the mission’s beliefs before receiving services such as medical treatment. At the Mission Lazarus clinics, as at the schools, the client pays a token amount (50 cents) for medical treatment and the clinic provides what the client needs, which might be an expensive medication. Even if the clinic does not have it, the staff will try to find it.

Such was the case with Lillian, whose daughter, Nancy, needed a growth hormone. Allison spent a year trying to get the expensive hormone donated from a pharmaceutical company, to no avail. After exhausting known donor possibilities, Allison decided to see if she could raise money from others to fund Nancy’s treatment. The cost of the hormone treatment would be about \$900 a month, or \$10,800 a year, and Allison was skeptical money like that would ever come in for one little girl.

Lillian, however, believed it would be found. Whenever Allison saw her at church, Lillian asked if Allison had any news about funding. “It got very disheartening that I would have to reply with a negative,” Allison said.

Lillian would respond, “Well, I thank God for you, because God has put you in my path.”

“She did not lose faith. She never wavered. She just had this faith that God was going to work it out because God could do impossible things,” Allison said. “I saw that she had that faith, and so I had to respond in kind.

Allison wrote about Nancy’s case and a few others in an online report to churches. A minister at the West Houston Church of Christ saw the report and the church took up a collection on a Sunday morning, expecting to gather \$5,000-\$10,000. When Mission Lazarus received the check, it was in the amount of \$50,000 – enough for several years of treatment. In February 2007 Nancy began her treatment, and in the first year grew about six inches and gained 12 pounds.

Allison says Nancy’s case reminds her not to give up in what appear to be hopeless cases. “There’s always hope. Not that there is hope in the world, but there is hope through God because He does impossible things,” Allison said. Working with special cases is another part of the medical ministry, which Allison, as medical director, personally oversees.

Since the clinic opened, the medical ministry has expanded to include a nutrition program, which through sponsorships provides malnourished children a monthly medical check-up, a monthly sack of food, and four laying hens whose eggs add protein to the children’s diet. About 80 children are in the program for one year, usually time enough for them to catch up nutritionally.

“We’re not in Honduras to be a welfare society,” Brown said. “We’re there to help them help themselves. The nutrition program is a way for the parents’ concerns for their child to be lifted and eased so the child can catch up.”

To keep kids out of the nutrition program, Mission Lazarus offers a family intervention program, providing basic health and hygiene education for 25 families each year. A doctor and clinic staff member visit the family every month to discuss ways they can improve their daily health practices, from not letting pigs in the house to washing hands before eating.

PLANTING SEEDS

From the seed project in 2001, Brown realized a door had opened for agricultural assistance to the mountain population, which





depends on the land for survival. Working with village leaders, Mission Lazarus began several efforts to help farmers succeed in the growing conditions of the rugged countryside.

One of the major obstacles is drought. Honduras has a distinct rainy season and a distinct dry season, which runs from November through May. During that time, farmers may lose a crop and not have any seed to plant another. Unlike the United States, there are no government aid packages for Honduran farmers, and bank loans to them may carry a hefty 25 percent interest rate, making repayment an impossibility for the already poor farmer who has no guarantee of another crop.

Working through the churches, Mission Lazarus provides non-interest-bearing loans, not of cash, but of product — seed, fertilizer or chemicals. The loan may be paid back six months later in cash when they sell their crop at market.

“That is a kind of a hand up, not a hand out, that can change these people’s financial and nutritional situation drastically. It allows them to expand how much they can grow and not be eaten alive by interest,” said Brown.

Mission Lazarus also helps farmers learn new agricultural techniques. One involves a drip irrigation kit, which uses a five-gallon bucket of water and a 20-yard strip of drip tape to help nourish a small crop in the dry season.

“With five gallons of water in the morning and five gallons of water in the afternoon, they can produce 20 yards of tomatoes or beets or carrots or cabbage, whatever they want to supplement their diet,” Brown said. “They won’t get rich off of it, but it can provide valuable nutrition.”

The methods are taught in weeklong seminars bringing together church ministers with village leaders, who often are not open to the Christian message. Brown said the program is used to reach people they would not ordinarily be able to reach with traditional methods, a strategy Jesus used successfully. “He didn’t go out and set up and start preaching,” Brown said. “He healed the sick and fed the hungry. He had a big crowd that asked advice, and he started talking to them.”

“One of the things about Mission Lazarus is they’re not holding medical attention or agricultural support over the heads of people saying, ‘to receive this you have to accept our religion,’” Mills said. “They’re serving people first, regardless, in hopes the indigenous folk will see their genuineness, their honesty, and be attracted to Jesus. What they’re trying to do is practice what Jesus did.”

Mills, Cooke, Dr. Kent Gallaher (former associate professor of environmental science), and Dr. Ed Brokaw (Bray Cook Professor of Animal Science) have all worked with Brown on solving agricultural issues for Mission Lazarus and the people it serves.

For three years, Mills and, more specifically, Gallaher, along with some ACU students, conducted research on a type of corn that would provide the best seed option for Honduran farmers. In an interesting coincidence, Gallaher’s father, Dr. Raymond Gallaher, had worked on breeding tropical corn 30 years ago as an agriculture scientist at the University of Florida. Following his retirement, 30 lines of tropical open-pollinated corn became his intellectual property, and he offered them to his son for research at Mission Lazarus. The corn seeds were planted in research crops tended last summer by ACU student Dylan Wann (’08).

“In fact, research we did last summer that will continue this summer tends to indicate we could perhaps improve their yield by as much as 50 percent in one year’s time,” said Gallaher. “Now, you talk about impacting the lives of people who have absolutely nothing. You increase the amount of food they have by 50 percent, and they can sell a whole lot more corn and have a whole lot more money in their pockets than they did before.”

Mission Lazarus has served as an experimental classroom for several ACU departments in recent years. Students and faculty from the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, College of Business Administration, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication have traveled to Honduras to work on projects for Mission Lazarus. They return home with a different perspective than when they left.

“The kids who come here gain so much knowledge they’d never be able to get out of a book,” Brown said. “Then, at the same time, they provide amazing resources to us as well, things we wouldn’t be able to do or have access to here in Honduras.”

DREAM COME TRUE

On a trip to Mission Lazarus in 2004, Dr. Rick Lytle, dean of the ACU College of Business Administration; his daughter, Kelly; and Brown went to the top of a mountain





FROM LEFT: Dr. Javier Arguijo examines a local patient; Mission Lazarus facilitates the training of church leaders in Choluteca; a woman sells crabs alongside the road to Cedeño, which lies on the Pacific coast of Honduras; Jarrod teaches a Sunday morning class at church; early childhood centers provide education and nurturing for needy kids in the villages.

BELOW: Jarrod and head mason Juan Herrera discuss preparation for the new orphanage in the mountaintop Mission Lazarus Refuge.

near Las Palmas, northeast of Choluteca. Lytle remembers Brown's words to him while overlooking acres of beautiful, pristine land.

"He said, 'I have a dream that we're going to purchase this property. I want to create a working ranch, a dairy farm ... grow coffee, and open an orphanage here. I don't have the money. I don't know how I'm going to get the money, but I believe God will provide.'"

Brown's dream was rooted in something very dear to his heart – his daughter, Soledad. The year before, at the age of 3 months, she had been brought to a clinic where Allison was working with a medical brigade. The clinic doctor told the mother the baby would not live, but Allison convinced her to take the child to a local hospital. The mother, who suffered from mental disabilities, abandoned the infant at the hospital. With care from Allison and women from the church, the baby became stronger and was ready to be released from the hospital. The government has no way to place an abandoned child, so Allison begged Jarrod to let her bring the baby home.

"As you can imagine, being married three months, I wasn't ready to be a dad," Brown recalled. "One night my wife says, 'Jarrod, if we are not willing to make a sacrifice to help this one child change her life, then why are we even down here?' I said, 'You're right!' So this child is now my 4-and-a-half-year-old daughter, who is 100 percent healthy, 100 percent bilingual, sharp as an arrow. She opened our eyes to the need in our region for a home for children.

"Every month the government reports 30 children in just our department [state] who are abandoned, orphaned or have to be removed from their homes due to parental neglect. The same institution overseeing child welfare is the same one that gives us our schools, so we already had a very good working relationship with them."

While visiting the beautiful ranch of the San Marcos de Colon mayor, Brown fell in love with the mountaintop property, the same land he later showed Lytle. In 2005, the mayor offered to sell the property to Mission Lazarus.

Brown bought it and three adjoining parcels, totaling 1,250 acres, over the next year for \$458,000. The price was paid by donations from North American Christians.

Nestled in the mountains 3,500 feet above sea level, Mission Lazarus Refuge contains a large three-bedroom house; a water well; milk barn, stable, hog barn and large corrals; 150 head of cattle, hogs, laying hens, and horses; an oak and pine forest, five ponds and one small river; 10 acres of farmland; and lots of land fenced and cleaned for pasture.

In addition, the orphanage is set up in home units, with 10 kids per home and two *tias*, or aunts, who take care of them. The first home opened in 2007, and another two are scheduled to open this summer, with a goal of 10 over the next couple years. Each child has a sponsor whose monthly donation pays for a variety of things, including caregivers' salaries, medical expenses, food, maintenance on the houses, clothes, private school enrollment, school supplies, and maintenance and fuel for transportation vehicles.

"Our goal is for the ranch production to offset a large part of the expenses of running the home, and at the same time, provide vocational and agricultural training to the children at the home," said Brown.

The ranch sells 450 liters of milk each day from its dairy cattle. "We have a coffee plantation and we raise organic, fair-trade, Arabica bean coffee that is really, really good," said Brown. "We sell part of it to a local coffee cooperative, then retail the rest to Americans."

Future plans for Mission Lazarus Refuge include a vocational school to teach trades such as blacksmithing, leathersmithing and carpentry, and another sewing school. The ACU Department of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, along with Healing Hands International, plans to work with Mission Lazarus on a variety of sustainable development projects that may eventually include biofuel and water components.

Brown plans to increase production of

corn, coffee and milk to supplement the income of Mission Lazarus and provide jobs for the ranch residents. Funding for the mission comes from individuals (60 percent), churches (30 percent), corporations (5 percent) and grants (5 percent).

Today the entire mission employs about 150 Hondurans. Only five Americans – Jarrod and Allison, Meredith Jones ('05), and Lipscomb University alumni Chad and Shelley Hedgepath – work with Mission Lazarus and receive their support from sponsoring churches. "From an economic point of view, Mission Lazarus plays a major, major role in the local economy," said Brown.

"I'm so proud of Jarrod for the work that he's doing," Lytle said. "I'm so proud he's taken his business skill set and applied it in a unique model to help people and to bring the gospel of Jesus to them. Selfishly, I want to be involved in it because I want to be more like Jarrod and I want our students to be more like Jarrod."

For Brown, the dream of owning the ranch isn't his only one to come true.

Gallaher teased Brown about having turned 30 during a dinner at the ranch in March 2007, and recalled Jarrod's collegiate ambition.

"Well, Kent, we just got through with our audit, and the mission is worth more than a million dollars," Jarrod said.

The irony is inescapable and humbling. It appears Jarrod Brown's calling was to be rich after all, but with a wealth that glorifies God instead.

"It just strikes me that here you have somebody who was so focused on making a million dollars for himself by the time he was 30, and yet, because of the choices he's made, has built a mission that's worth a million dollars for the Lord," Gallaher said. "The worth of the souls he has influenced, however, goes far beyond any monetary value."▲

For more on this ministry: www.missionlazarus.org