

SEW HOPE

STRENGTHENING AND EMPOWERING WITH
HEALTH, OPPORTUNITY, AND EDUCATION.

2009 Missions Report



Dear SewHope Supporters,

Our hope is that this newsletter will begin to communicate the incredible impact that ALL of your efforts and contributions have made to the people we serve in Guatemala in the name of Christ. With your support, SewHope sponsored three mission trips to the Petén, Guatemala's most northern and remote department, this February, April, and July. A fourth trip is planned for November of this year.



On these trips, we continued to see the tremendous injustice that is being suffered by the poor of Guatemala. The latest U.N. statistics show that Guatemala has the sixth worst rate of chronic malnutrition in the world affecting nearly half of its 13 million children. In the Petén, the picture is far worse with 80% of the indigenous Mayan children malnourished. Recent problems in the world's economy and a drought due to El Niño have made the situation more extreme with families scarcely even being able to afford beans, their most important source of protein.

In villages like Pueblo Nuevo where we serve, we witnessed firsthand all the horrors of poverty, famine, and disease. Most of the people do not have clean water or sanitation and while some villages may be fortunate enough to have a well, there is often no piping for distribution or fuel to run the pump. Few homes have basic latrines. Many people don't understand the relationship between having pigs and chickens in their homes, human feces in their yards, and infectious diseases. For most Guatemalans, the public education system is abysmal. In addition to a lack of basic supplies and books, the teachers can barely read and often have minimal education themselves. Some of the classrooms have leaky tin roofs and dirt floors so that when the sun is out, the room is an oven, and when it rains, school must be cancelled because the classroom is a mud pit. Worst of all, the children are hungry and their malnutrition impairs their mental development. To escape poverty, they need to learn, but how? Even their mothers cannot help much. Around 60-80% of women in the Petén cannot read!



As for basic medical care, it is almost non-existent. We toured a local hospital which covers an area of 200,000 people. There were 38 beds and one doctor. During our visit, two women were in labor, two men had fractures, a young child was near death, and a young boy had severe lacerations from a boat propeller! The clinics were filled with demoralized employees and the pharmacy shelves were nearly empty. There was no lab or radiology testing and the health care workers had little or no training.

Perhaps a sadder story is the failure of churches, both here and in Guatemala, to address these problems. Jesus asked us to feed His children, take care of the widowed and sick, and love our neighbors – it is the most basic command of the bible. But often the churches are just another vehicle for divisiveness. In a village of about 60 families where we serve, there are four churches! How can churches serve the community when they are competing with each other for members?

And what is the result of starvation, illiteracy, disease, and lack of spiritual growth? Broken homes, broken hearts, violence, alcoholism, and despair. We hear it in countless stories from the people we served. But Jesus told us what to do:

Matthew 7:7

“Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

After many years of "knocking", we are starting to see significant results. Perhaps the greatest result of this year's trips was the affirmation that our work is needed and most importantly, *is being adopted* by the people we serve. After years of being challenged by government corruption and non-profit organizations that are unable to work together because of ideological differences, we are making lasting progress in health, education, economic opportunity, and spiritual growth by hearing and following the Lord's command. In the rest of this newsletter, we describe our programs and successes this past year and highlight some of the many compelling stories we experienced. We worked in medical clinics, schools, and homes. We visited shut-ins and the elderly. Our educators distributed needed books and supplies and helped the local teachers with lesson ideas. We continued helping families build latrines and also to start vegetable gardens. Our pastor worked with the local pastors to build unity and support amongst the churches. These completed "tasks" were important, but the most important things were the many opportunities we had to visit with the people in groups, one-on-one, and in their homes that allowed us to learn about their lives, hopes, and needs. These times together and the fact we continue to return have helped build trust and acceptance of our efforts.

HEALTH PROGRAM

SewHope sponsored three medical teams to Guatemala this year. Led by pediatrician Dr. Gary Collins, family practice physician Dr. Coral Matus, and gynecologists Dr. Renee Mason and Dr. Anne Ruch, the



teams also included several incredible University of Toledo medical students, advanced practitioners, and other health care workers from the Toledo area. The teams treated both children and adults, and the July group focused on women's health. The teams worked in several locations including the small village of Pueblo Nuevo and the larger communities of San Benito, Santa Ana, Mango,



and Naranjo. The medical teams developed a system of follow-up for when the teams are not there that was adopted by the local health care workers and also provided highly useful training for these workers and the local health promoters. A fourth medical mission is planned for November this year.

Women's Health – We continue working in the crucial area of women's health and education because we know there is a positive relationship between a family's success and women's health and empowerment. Approximately 500 women were seen in our gynecology clinic and were treated for



various women's health issues. We performed 250 Pap smears and ten were identified as being abnormal. Follow-up colposcopy and treatment of these women will be done during the November medical trip. Over 100 pregnant women received prenatal care and were provided with vitamins and education regarding pregnancy issues. Dr. Renee Mason performed ultrasounds that provided the



mothers with crucial information about their babies. We also met with regional midwives and health promoters which led to plans for a Women's Health Conference next summer where we will cover many topics related to reproductive health and cervical cancer prevention.



Pediatrics – Dr. Gary Collins and Dr. Coral Matus led our efforts to serve the medical needs of children. They both brought teams to the Petén and treated many kids who suffered from diseases not typically seen here. In November, they will return to Santa Ana and Pueblo Nuevo to continue this work.



Surgery – After a successful surgical mission trip to the Petén in 2008, we have been invited by Dr. Ray Flores, the health minister for the region to send a surgical team there in April, 2010. We also met with the Medical Director of Hospital Sayaxche, Dr. Sandra Sanchenelli, and the one physician running the entire hospital. It is a 38 bed hospital that serves a region of 200,000 people. They are in great need of assistance with general surgery, plastic surgery, urology and Ob/Gyn services.



Prevention of Parasitic Disease – We have been educating the villagers about the links between stomach parasites and other diseases, poor sanitation, and dirty water, and have been helping them build composting latrines. Ten latrines have been completed in Pueblo Nuevo and many more families are requesting our help to build them. We are also providing de-worming medicine to the villagers on a semi-annual basis. Our hope is that with education and sanitation, worms will be eradicated and other diseases will decline greatly. As an added bonus, compost from the latrines will be used in the new gardens!



Dental Health – One of the most heartbreaking things we have seen on our trips is the poor dental health of kids that most often results in pulled teeth! The people we serve lack fluoridated water and money for toothbrushes and toothpaste. Poor dental health can also lead to other diseases. We have begun a program to apply a fluoride varnish every 6 months on the children's teeth and to supply them with toothbrushes/paste as well as instructions about brushing and foods that are good for the teeth.



NUTRITION PROGRAM



Kids Against Hunger Supplemental Food – There is much hunger in Guatemala due to poor crop yields from drought and the downturned economy. People are unable to grow or buy sufficient food. To help alleviate this hunger, we have introduced Kids Against Hunger prepackaged food as a supplemental food source for the villages we serve. The KAH food provides a daily, complete, nutritious meal and has been well accepted by the Guatemalan children and their families. It has also given us opportunities for fellowship and discussion of health and nutrition. While this food aid is only a short-term solution, it will help the children grow and the adults stay healthy until crop yields and job opportunities improve. Schoolchildren and other groups from the Toledo area are raising funds to buy the bulk KAH food and then will package it for shipping to Guatemala.

Vitamins – Working with the organization, Give To Grow, which was started by Beatrice Thaman (right), we continue to distribute daily vitamins to the school children and pre-school children in Pueblo Nuevo and other villages. Give to Grow is expanding its efforts this year so that we will be able to provide 500,000 vitamins to Guatemalan children next year! Beatrice is a wonderful example of what one, determined person can accomplish.



Fruit and Vegetable Gardens – During our July trip, we helped the people of Pueblo Nuevo start gardens at the school and their homes. Although most of the men work in surrounding fields growing corn and beans or tending livestock (often

for an employer), it was surprising that they did not grow food in home gardens or cultivate fruit and nut trees. After education and encouragement, we helped the community start gardens at the school and several homes. At the school, the children, teachers, and community members all pitched in loosening



the soil, clearing the rocks, collecting and pulverizing manure before working it into the soil. One of the community's pastors said it all, "Nowhere in the Petén will you find a garden like this!" More importantly, the community was greatly united in this effort, and several families subsequently started gardens at their homes. We also hope to introduce novel sources of food such as amaranth. This plant was a major, traditional staple of the Mayans and Aztecs, but fell out of use two centuries ago. However, it grows well on poor soil, is drought-resistant, and is highly rich in complete protein, vitamins, calcium, and other

nutrients. Amaranth is being re-introduced in some areas of Guatemala and Mexico. We hope to do the same in the Petén and to help the people grow other nutritious foods such as cashews and Moringa. These efforts will help the people become less reliant on supplemental food such as that from Kids Against Hunger and will improve their nutrition, health, and physical and mental development.

EDUCATION PROGRAM

School at Pueblo Nuevo – Our teachers spent several days with the students and teachers at the public school (grades 1-6) in Pueblo Nuevo with the goal of understanding what the current situation is and what we can do to help them. There are many needs and little government support. One of the current classrooms has a leaking tin roof, open sides, a dirt floor, and no space for books. The teachers are dedicated, but need improved education, lesson planning skills, and basic supplies, textbooks, and new workbooks.



During this trip, we brought school supplies, several classic children's books in Spanish, and helped the teachers with some simple lesson ideas. In the future, we hope to help them fix the classroom with the dirt floors and leaky tin roof, provide needed supplies, and help the teachers with their teaching skills. We also deepened our relationship with the school kids by helping them celebrate Guatemala's Independence Day with piñatas in the school yard and by teaching them bible songs which they performed at a worship service.



Distribution of Books in Colonia Tikal Elementary School – Our education committee led by Sr. Pam Buganski sent more than 400 books to an elementary school in Colonia Tikal, which is located in a more urban community than the village of Pueblo Nuevo. This school is vastly superior to village schools, but there are still very limited resources. The principal has been working with us to identify their greatest needs. We were able to meet one need by providing all the students with some of the best loved



children's books in Spanish. The response was overwhelming! Every child wrote a letter of gratitude and the principal put on a grand assembly to recognize the impact these books would have on the education of the children. One of our teachers on the trip, Ashley, taught the children how to care for the books and how they could be enjoyed with classmates.



SPIRITUAL GROWTH

As we reflect on our trips, we always ask ourselves, "How did we put Christ in the midst of our mission?" We started off our two weeks with a powerful worship service led by Pastor Truett and the four pastors from Pueblo Nuevo. Pastor Truett reminded us there is only one true church - the church of Jesus Christ. It is a church of power and love driven by the passion and power of the Holy Spirit. Pastor Truett's words inspired us throughout the trip to remember that we do have the power and love of Christ behind us and that yes, we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength. Division among Christian churches continues to be an enormous problem in these communities. Failure of the churches to join together to help their communities is often the result of "church planting" in the name of a denomination rather than in the name of Christ. We were thus overjoyed at being able to bring the four pastors of Pueblo Nuevo together for this service and most importantly, for future planning for their people. Pastor Truett distributed 100 bibles and had many opportunities to preach to the people about God's will for their lives. We also continue to pray with our patients and we always keep God in the midst of our evening meetings and daily efforts.



WHY WE KEEP RETURNING

A Young Widow – This is a tragic story, but similar tragedies are not uncommon in Guatemala. As we began to do a cervical cancer screen on a 32 year old woman, she seemed sad. Although we had a long line of patients, we listened to her story. Her husband had gone to collect the pay he was due from his employer three weeks earlier, but he never came home. After searching for several days, she was finally shown pictures of her dead husband with a noose around his badly beaten body. Apparently, he was killed for asking about his pay. No one bothered to find his family and she does not know where his body is. No one could help her and her four children who are now left with no income and nowhere to turn. We were able to provide them with food and vitamins for the next few months. Several people from our group visited them and gave them clothes and a bible, and prayed with them. This small offering of help is only a start towards their recovery and survival. Our in-country representative will continue to visit the family and make sure they are cared for.



Family Support in the Midst of Poverty – We went on many home visits throughout the villages to those who could not get to the clinic. An elderly Mayan woman who had a stroke two years earlier was completely unable to move her left side. Expecting to find contractures and pressure sores throughout her body, we were completely amazed to find her in perfect condition. Her skin was smooth and her joints fully mobile. Although there was no health care "system" to take care of her, her family members had taken turns staying with her at all times, massaging her and just loving her. How many would do that here? That is the side of poverty that all of us who go on mission trips are often shocked by. When society doesn't take care of you, you must rely on your family, your community, and God.

The School Garden – One of the many highlights of the July trip occurred on the last day we visited Pueblo Nuevo. The day before, several team members had visited with the school teachers there and discussed ways to teach the children about nutrition. One teacher was especially excited when the idea of a school garden arose. We made plans to come back the next day - our last day - and start the garden, but did not expect a tremendous response. Instead, when we arrived, the teachers, students, and others from the community had already begun fencing off the garden space and turning the soil. After several more hours where we joined in, the ground was prepared and ready for planting. It was a tremendous and affirming blessing of our efforts to see such a trusting response from the community.

OTHER SEWHOPE HIGHLIGHTS

Beatrice Thaman – Beatrice was named one of America’s top ten youth volunteers for 2009 in a ceremony at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, winning a national Prudential Spirit of Community Award for her outstanding volunteer service collecting vitamins for children of Guatemala. She was selected from a field of close to 20,000 applicants from across the country!

<http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS157281+04-May-2009+BW20090504>

<http://www.toledoblade.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090211/NEWS16/902110362>

Eduardo Salas – Last winter, we had the great privilege of bringing 14 year-old Eduardo Salas to Toledo to have a brain tumor removed. His operation was successfully performed by Dr. Ahmed Zakeri



and he was cared for by the Paul and Carol Doerfler family during his time here. During our July trip, we visited Eduardo at his home and had a joyous time meeting his family and sharing a wonderful, traditional meal. Eduardo is doing very well and again riding his bike and selling the family’s homemade soups around the neighborhood.



<http://www.toledoblade.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090503/NEWS32/905030354>

Grant Awards – SewHope was very fortunate to win two grants this past year. The first of \$3,000 was from North Shore Baptist Church in Chicago, IL and will support the building of latrines in Pueblo Nuevo. The second of \$7,000 was from Zion Lutheran Church in Waterville, OH and will be used to purchase a “start-up kit” of bulk food and packaging equipment from Kids Against Hunger.

Ismael Martinez Pineda – This past year, SewHope hired Ismael Martinez Pineda as our Regional Director in the Petén to facilitate our efforts when we are not there. A native of the region, Ismael has been a tremendous blessing. He oversees the KAH food and vitamin distribution, arranges clinic and school visits for our teams, as well as lodging and travel accommodations, and takes care of many issues that arise when we are not there. The fact he is a native of the region and understands the culture has been a great blessing and opened many doors for us.



LEAP Fundraiser – SewHope held its second annual LEAP (Love Ends All Poverty) fundraiser at the MMK Gallery in downtown Toledo on February 21st. The night was a lot of fun with food, salsa dancing, and Guatemalan items for purchase.

Medical Spanish Class – Deena Ellis is teaching medical Spanish to a group of about 30 medical students and other health care workers so they will be better able to communicate with patients on our trips. The course tuition course will help support the travel of interpreters on SewHope mission trips.

Miles for Missions 5K – On August 15th, SewHope held its inaugural Miles for Missions 5K run/walk along the Klewer Towpath trail and Side Cut Park in Maumee. There were approximately 150 participants and they ran or walked a beautiful 3.1 mile course on a warm, sticky morning. The event raised over \$1,200 and a few heart rates.

Natalie King – University of Toledo Medical student, Natalie King, was the winner of this year’s Shannon E. Wilson Award for her tremendous efforts in supporting SewHope’s medical ministries and for her efforts in the medical school’s Students for Medical Missions organization.

This has been a tremendous year for SewHope and we are overjoyed by the way you and God have blessed our efforts. Your prayers, financial support, and help in so many other ways, have made all of the above efforts possible. We thank you wholeheartedly for your love and kindness.

We also would like to give special thanks to:

- **St. Paul's Lutheran Church** in Maumee, Ohio for continuous spiritual and financial support
- **Ottawa Hills School and Borders Books** for providing over 400 books for the children
- **ProMedica Health System** for long-standing support
- **Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church** in Waterville, Ohio for financial support which has made our Kids Against Hunger program possible
- **The "Friends of Guatemala"** for continued financial support of our surgical efforts
- **North Shore Baptist Church** in Chicago for their contributions toward our latrine program
- **3M ESPE Dental Products** for providing 1,000 fluoride varnish treatments for the children
- **Give to Grow and The Prudential Foundation** for financial support and supplying daily vitamins for the children
- **Hologic LP** for pap smear testing supplies
- **King Pharmaceuticals** for their continuous provision of pharmaceuticals and deworming medicines
- **University of Toledo** for allowing us to work with their incredible medical students
- **The pathology/cytotechnology department of Toledo Hospital** for making our cervical cancer prevention program possible. Special thanks to Dr. Anne Conklin and Archetta Smith.
- **The Toledo Clinic, ProMedica Health System, The Ohio Spine Network, and Dr. Ahmed Zakeri** for making possible the brain surgery for Eduardo Salas

2 Corinthians: 9:12-16

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

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Please visit our website to follow our
progress throughout the year!

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