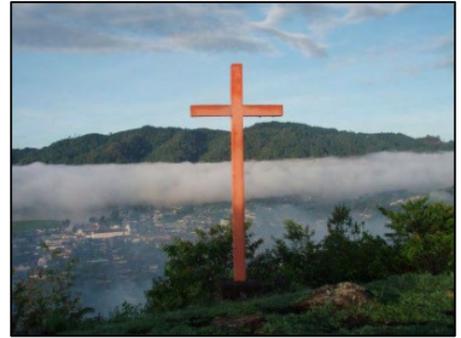


## ***SewHope Medical Mission Trip June 2008***

In 2 Corinthians, Jesus tells St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." These words spoke loudly to me during our mission trip to Guatemala in June. Miracles truly can happen when a group of people refuse to accept that injustice, oppression and exploitation are inevitable. This ministry continues to prove to me that when people are inspired to act through God, change and healing really are possible.



Our team of 38 people included doctors, nurses, medical students, teachers, translators, a pastor and many others. But there were hundreds of people who never left the U.S. who made these miracles possible. For those of you who contributed but did not get the joy of receiving hugs and seeing tears of gratitude, I send a huge THANK YOU!!



Having been frustrated for many years by the reality that a short term trip can do little to bring about long term change, we now have the privilege of working with a missionary family whose commitment is making it possible for us to work toward sustainable projects in this region. We give great thanks to Bio and Derida Ochaeta and their daughter, Albana, who have given their lives to doing God's work in Guatemala.

During our two weeks in the Petén region of Guatemala, home to about 500,000 people, we had four medical teams functioning each day and treating about a thousand people! We staffed a clinic, performed surgeries and visited patients in remote villages. We stocked a clinic with at least a



year's supply of medications for hundreds of patients. We also painted the clinic inside and out and are training the staff to monitor and treat chronic medical problems. We will help fund the salaries of nurses and a doctor there. We brought 40,000 deworming treatments and 60,000 vitamins for children and pregnant



women. We also set up an obstetrics and gynecology clinic complete with ultrasound, colposcopy and cryotherapy. We distributed 600 pairs of eyeglasses to the needy and are working with the only diabetic clinic in the Petén to supply them with diabetic testing supplies and medications.



We have also developed strong ties with a local Christian hospital, Hospital Shalom, where we performed many surgeries during our two weeks there. We give special praise to Tim and Doris Spurrier who have given 20 years of their lives to founding and building this hospital. We are also grateful to the wonderful staff and supporters of this facility.



In addition to this medical outreach, our team has made real strides working with the people in other vital areas of their lives. Our teachers not only observed and taught classes in the local school, but more importantly, they helped the teachers there develop curriculum and learn teaching techniques and brought needed books and supplies. Thanks to your generous donations, we were able to bring 65 children to a water park - the first field trip their school ever had! What the teachers learned on this trip has enabled us to plan for future projects.

Recognizing that escape from poverty requires self-sustainability, we are attempting to facilitate small business initiatives among the people. We have begun a partnership with an existing organization that provides microenterprise loans in the Petén. People from our group are currently working with a group of women there on an exciting venture making paper and cards using local plants and flowers. In a place where women have little or no opportunities, this project is providing real hope.



Proper sanitation, clean water, and nutritious food are fundamental to good health. During the trip, we were able to begin water testing for fecal contamination and follow-up with the people about alternatives when impure water was found. We worked in a remote village helping to fund and build composting latrines; we are now helping provide latrines for all the families of this village. A ready-to-use, nutritious, emergency food was introduced to villagers and was well accepted.



We also worked with young men at the Pathways of Hope vocational center that was started by the Ochaetas to teach youth job skills and keep them out of gangs and crime. Members of our group also passed out 500 Spanish versions of the New Testament to members of the villages and cities. The Bibles were greatly appreciated and the people were often seen later around town or the villages reading them.



But the greatest story is the evidence of God's miraculous love during this trip. We were constantly up against dilemmas that could never have been resolved without God's grace. During our first week, a young woman arrived complaining of a "sore" on her leg. When she raised her skirt, I was horrified to see



a 6 inch ulcer extending to her leg bone that was covered with flies. For four years, she had sought medical help to no avail. Seeming distraught, desperate and even ashamed, she described how her husband had left her over this and she was really unable to carry out a normal life. In my heart I knew that we neither had the skills nor the supplies to take care of this problem. Yet I felt the real power of the Holy Spirit as I tried to assure her that we would help. Through a combination of many blessings including the great skill of one of our surgeons,



the advice of our medical contacts at home and the supplies of many generous donors, this woman is now on the road to complete recovery and a new life.

There were countless other stories. A desperate mother brought her 13 year old boy who had a brain tumor to our gynecology clinic! Knowing that there was really no possibility of a cure for him in Guatemala and also knowing that none of us had any expertise in this area, we decided to pray. We felt God telling us to look for an answer. Now, a neurosurgeon in Toledo is working with another doctor at the University of Michigan to have this boy brought here and operated on this January! A woman who never had a Pap smear presented with symptoms suspicious for cervical cancer. Thanks to Hospital Shalom, we were able to operate on her and cure her early stage cancer. Many women with debilitating gynecological problems were operated on and are now able to work again.



A young woman with post-partum sepsis was treated and cured. A group of very excited women are looking forward to starting a business. A group of teachers in a school are eagerly anticipating books and opportunities to improve their teaching skills. Families will have clean water and decent latrines for the first time. Young men have hope for a better life than drugs, gangs and crime.



I thank God for each of you who joined us in this work of providing mercy and compassion to the poorest of God's people. For those of you who went to Guatemala or who supported this trip, I know that in doing this work, ALL of us more fully know God's love and we prosper in the ways and blessings of His Spirit.

### **SPECIAL THANKS to the following whose help made this trip possible!**

- **Bio, Derida and Albana Ochaeta** - for listening to God's call for your lives and inspiring all of us!
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