

SewHope Trip Report – June 5-16 2010

Trip Members: Anne Ruch, Randy Ruch, Coral Matus, Lindsay Matus, Alex Matus, Melinda Rakesmith, Deena Ellis, Katherine McDowell, Puja Venkat, Benjamin Singer, Becky Thorsby

Translator from Guatemala – Gaby Munoz

Medical –

1. Spent first day arranging clinic in Pueblo Nuevo. Set up ultrasound and colposcope, arranged meds and supplies. Ismael and family had completely organized bodega and installed air conditioner.
2. Saw patients every day in 2 exam rooms – one gynecology (Anne), one med/peds (Coral)
 - a. Followed up on previous abnormal paps
 - b. Ultrasounds, pap smears, prenatal visits, patient education, treatment of many different gyn problems.
 - c. Varicose veins – distributed support hose
 - d. Treated plantar fasciitis
 - e. Gall bladder ultrasounds
 - f. Gastritis
 - g. H. pylori
 - h. Diarrhea
 - i. Diabetes
 - j. Urinary tract infections
3. Students distributed toothbrushes and paste. They also provided fluoride treatments and deworming meds in 3 villages in addition to Pueblo Nuevo.
4. Continued with developing filing system
5. Health promoter did not come to clinic
6. Provided health promoter in Monte Rico with vitamins, first aid supplies

Nutrition

1. New gardens continue to expand
2. KAH food distribution continues as planned in 7 villages
3. We met with mayor in Santa Ana and donated KAH food and vitamins for victims of recent natural disasters in Guatemala City.

Education

1. Complete student evaluations
2. Music class with Coral's daughters
3. Showed movie
4. Taught importance of handwashing with "glitter" project
5. Weaving projects with women

6. Spent a day at the “beach” with teens from Pueblo Nuevo – a good opportunity to hear their struggles, challenges, hopes, dreams.
7. Had dinner with teachers from Pueblo Nuevo school
8. Several meetings with school director – Concepcion Ortiz (46044932). Worked with him to develop some short and long term plans. He shared with us his master’s thesis which is a complete community assessment of Pueblo Nuevo. He wants to work with us to develop a vision of Pueblo Nuevo as a “best performing school”
9. Continued to develop understanding of the challenges
 - a. No support from parents
 - b. Fathers are often living in the U.S.
 - c. Sanitation problems
 - d. Insufficient teachers
 - e. No supplies or books
10. Worked with children to understand importance of clean school. Boys volunteered to keep classrooms clean.

Sanitation

1. Installation of first “tippy-tap” – great success with many villagers eager to have one built in their homes. Plans to build them in front of school.
2. Distributed books written by “Snoopy Nichols” called “Wash your Hands! (in Spanish). The kids loved them and they were a great teaching tool.
3. See #10 and #4 above

Spiritual

1. Worship services in Pueblo Nuevo with all villagers on both Sundays. Different pastors preached and also Ismael. His boys played their band instruments. We continue to work with pastors and people to work together as a community of Christ rather than competing churches. The Nazarene church gave us a proposal to help them with a church building. It was a good opportunity to explain we are not here representing a particular denomination.
2. Many opportunities for prayer with patients undergoing great struggles (unplanned pregnancies, physical pain, death of children, poverty, hunger, etc)

Special individuals

1. Flori
2. Paraplegiac boy at hospital with colostomy
3. Jose’s son with “hip fracture”
4. Provided wife of Nazarene pastor with diabetes supplies
5. Brought stroller for baby with neuromuscular disorder

Letters home to families during trip

Letter #1

Hola everyone!!

We're all here in one piece and managed to get all the meds and supplies through customs without any problem. As I opened the bags tonight, I thought of all of you at home and all you've done to make this trip possible. We are so grateful to all of you.

Hace muy calor!! Probably the hottest I've ever felt down here - but for those of you who know me well, that makes me happy while everyone else suffers!

As always, Ismael and Orpha and their son were at the airport with big smiles and hugs and welcomed us warmly. Since we're always at the same little hotel, that's a bit like coming home also.

We had a beautiful little time of prayer up on the roof of the hotel and now off to bed. Melinda thinks I'm going running with her in the morning at 6 - we'll see!

More later-----

Anne

Letter #2

Hello Family and friends,

We had another productive day in Pueblo Nuevo. Anne, Coral, Gaby and I worked at the clinic seeing patients. Gaby was such a blessing. She is going to school to be a missionary. She lives and has grown up in Guatemala. She is functioning as an interpreter for us. She is more than that. She is a direct gift from God. Gaby always has God as the center for everything. When we get too busy getting ready for the day she always stops us for prayer and everyone stops without question to pray.

Randy and Ismael were busy rounding up supplies and assessing the gardens and latrines in Pueblo Nuevo.

Lyndsey, Alex and Deena worked at the school this morning. Lyndsey and Alex taught the children how to play the recorder. It was the second lesson for the children. They taught them yesterday also. The girls said they were beginning to be able to play a complete song.

Deena did some testing of the children. It turns out to be quite sad. Most of the children did not do well. Deena, Anne, Randy, Orfi and Ismael had a meeting tonight with the teachers from the school. There are 6 teachers and I believe only one or two showed up. It's not surprising though because most of them are not showing up to teach school more than once a week. We are trying to assess just how bad it actually is.

There are 5 students who are of high school age. The high school takes 90 minutes to walk to. One goes by motorcycle and two quit going because of transportation. They also said by the time they get home from school it is too dark to study. Because they do not have electricity, we may try to bring book lights next time. They are also up early every morning making tortillas and taking care of siblings. They say they are exhausted.

We are still building upon a foundation for our mission work here. Each day the picture becomes clearer and we know more than ever that God is in control..

Please pray for safe travel for Puja, Becky and Kettie who will join us tomorrow.

Melinda

Letter #3

Hello everyone,

Just to let you know Puja, Kettie, Becky and Benjamin all arrived safely tonight.

I need to update you regarding the meeting with the teachers last night. It turns out that 3 of the 4 teachers showed up for the meeting. One of the teachers was on his way when his motorcycle broke down. Deena, Anne, Randy, Ismael and Orfi found the meeting to be very productive. The teachers have been unmotivated to show up to teach because the children are very uncooperative in the classroom not to mention that combined with the heat. After an encouraging talk with the teachers they felt more empowered to begin to improve the school. They did not know about the incentives the school could receive by improving, such as funding. Today all 4 of the teachers showed up for school. God is good. Today we had another day in Pueblo Nuevo at the clinic. It has been very hot and humid here. The hottest was Sunday, 105 degrees. We just drink water continuously.

We saw many people from other villages again today. Mostly the same complaints, headaches, stomach aches, head aches, usually all related to dehydration. We have treated many cases of H. Pylori. Gaby and I have become good at recognizing it before the patients see the doctor and automatically test for it. 9 out of 10 times we have been right.

Deena, Lyndsey and Alex went to the school again this morning and said the children are enjoying learning how to play the recorders. Deena read books with the 4th and 6th graders.

Anne was sick for a few hours today. We begged her to go back to the hotel but she is very stubborn as many of you know. That is how this mission group is so successful. She finally did lie down for about an hour and started right back to seeing patients after she rested. She is the Rock of Gibraltar. In the meantime Coral saw as many patients as she could. It is awesome watching Coral work with her patients. She is compassionate and patient with each and every one of them. I have learned so much from her.

Lyndsey and Alex (the 12 year old twins) and Deena returned to the clinic after school and helped us. The girls even know how to take vital signs and check blood sugars and they function like little nurses. We are tired but feel we are receiving so many blessings by being able to help the people of Pueblo Nuevo. It really is like being at home since so many of the faces are now familiar and we are trusted by all. We receive hundreds of hugs and kisses daily.

Love, hugs and kisses,

Melinda

PS: Deena and I were trying to think of a present for Ismael and Orfi before we came. The day before we left Deena suggested a digital camera. We bought it and gave it to them and found out today that Orfi

had been praying for a camera that she needs for her social work classes. Now if that is not God, I do not know what is.

Letter #4

Just a quick update - the bus is waiting! Yesterday was so unbelievable! The people on this trip have brought so much energy and love and SO many gifts! We have asked Him each day to let us see the gifts we have within ourselves to give and to forgive ourselves for the times we wish we could do things that are impossible for us. He has answered our prayers each day!

So much was done yesterday! In the clinic we encountered so much. A young unwed girl found out was pregnant. She sobbed as she told us that her father would beat her and she would probably be shunned from her community as this is not allowed in this part of the country. She will either get a dangerous abortion or have to move to the city and possibly become a prostitute just to provide for her other child and this baby. Puja, Gaby and I cried inside as we thought about how women are treated around the world.

Then a bright spot as another woman had an ultrasound because of pelvic pain and found out she was pregnant also. She knew her husband would be so excited so received her permission to have Benjamin film it as we brought her husband in to see the ultrasound. He was so delighted as we all yelled "felicidades" to him. You could see how proud he was. No different than all over the world.

Coral continues to find an answer for almost any illness. Gladys, Coral's nurse was able to get us Jobst stocking which Puja and Ketty brought with them on Wednesday. YOU can't imagine the joy of the women as they put these women as they had the pain of their huge varicosities relieved!

We're close to running out of the enormous amount of drugs we brought. People from other villages are squeezing into pick-up trucks to get to the clinic. It is so humbling.

Yesterday, one of the pick up trucks going back wouldn't start so 15 of the people jumped out and pushed it until it started. Then they all jumped back in!

Randy's project with the "tippy-taps" has been a huge success (check them out on line). Ismael is even going to make one for his own home. Karen's books were used in conjunction with them as well as the "glitter project" (also check on line) to teach how germs are spread. We really feel like we're getting the message of sanitation and health across.

All the women made the bags from the project that Sr. Pam sent. What a joy to watch them.

The teachers totally astounded us. After our dinner meeting with them the other night, they all got together and wrote up a huge grand plan for improving the school. It was unbelievable. They will be typing it out and it is exactly what we need for writing a grant. They seem to be totally on board with us. Randy also made the detergent with the teen girls - got them thinking about ways to start a business. In the midst of it all, Benjamin has been enthusiastically filming everything. He has so much talent and has a great way of humbly interacting with everyone in a way that they are comfortable being on camera. It astounds me that God picked this particular trip for him to be on since this week seems to be the really the beginning of so many things we have worked so hard to achieve.

I can't say enough about each individual and how they are giving their all. Puja has picked up right where she left on the last trip, humbly using her great compassion and intelligence to help these people.

Melinda seems to always be there when needed to do anything. She's keeping the flow going in the clinic and getting the patients completely prepared so we can efficiently see them. Coral's girls jump in

constantly without even having to be asked. Since this is Ketty's first trip, she is so willing to go wherever asked and is so helpful - I'm putting her in the GYN cage today!

We could do none of this without Deena and Gaby who have such deep love and understanding of this culture. Deena was totally cracking me up yesterday as she was drawing so much information from an older woman about the use of medicinal herbs in this country. Her laughter always keeps us going. Gaby starts and ends our day with beautiful, inspiring prayers which set the tone for all this work.

I received a notarized typed letter yesterday from one of the pastors. He wants us to contribute money to help finish the construction of a new Nazarene church. Ismael and I smiled as we know that church is really His love being shared with those we encounter and not a church building. We will not contribute to the divisiveness of churches which only draws people away from God but will continue to demonstrate His love in unity. Maybe one day there will be one church united for God.

We pray all is well with you all!

Anne

Letter #5

Hello Family and Friends,

We had an awesome day today. As I wrote earlier, some went to Tikal and some went to the waterpark. Those who went to Tikal loved it and even held a tarantula!

We had about 15 of the girls and boys from the youth group with us at the waterpark. We also took advantage of the lake beside the park and swam in it. Orfe made homemade tamales (cooked in banana leaves), guacamole and tortillas. DELICIOUS!!!! The youth group had a great time. Randy set new speed records going down the water slides. Puja gave Orfe swimming lessons. I trained for the swimming portion of my triathlon. The boys were impressed with my goggles and they all loved the beach balls. Tomorrow we attend church in Pueblo Nuevo. Gaby will be preaching at the service. She has been working many hours on her sermon. After the service we will have our own world cup soccer tourney with the jerseys donated by young life. After that we are showing "Finding Nemo" in Spanish. I should be fluent after that. LOL

By the way there is a breakfast here called the Obama Breakfast. It has a little of everything in it. It had eggs, french fries, beans, pancakes, fruit and tortilla...Got to go to the meeting.

Hasta Mañana,

Melinda

Letter #6

Subject: Monday in Guatemala

So much happened yesterday that it's hard to believe it was just one day. Throughout the day, thoughts whirled around my mind. We had such incredible breakthroughs and as they happened, I was often reminded of the goodness of one person who was responsible for that miracle. Sadly, the day ended with more questions than answers and we wonder if there will ever be justice.

Gaby, Becky, Ketty and Benjamin went off with our other driver, Pedro, to a different aldea to provide the children with fluoride treatments. There are 230 children here and they are already receiving the KAH food and the vitamins each day. The group recorded all the children's names and their weight,

height, age and status of their teeth. The school is quite a bit better than Pueblo Nuevo so it showed them immediate things that could be done to improve things at the school there (eg. uniforms). Puja, Melinda and I manned the clinic with our broken Spanish and Deena did all her work at the school. We saw patients until 1 and continued to hear stories that left us speechless. One young woman came in with concerns about irregular periods and when we asked her if there was stress at home, we heard about the reality of so many women here. She's left with 4 children at home - husband in U.S. for last 5 years - minimal food. Her brother-in-law lives next door and because of a family dispute, he often threatens her and wields his gun around, sometimes pointing it at her head. Women are trapped with no one to turn to.

We then went to the municipality to meet with the mayor to give him the KAH food to send down to Guatemala City to give the victims of the recent natural disasters here. Ismael, myself and Orphe were invited into his office. Randy, I know you will remember our visit there less than 2 years ago! It was somewhat hostile and we were treated like absolute outsiders. Oh, this was a different picture! They have so much respect for Ismael and Orphe and our group now! He listened and Ismael described our jornada this week. His eyebrows went up when he heard about the ultrasound machine (thank you John DeKeyser!) and the pap smear program (thank you Chetti!). When Orphe described the sewing projects that Sr. Pam had sent for the women to do, he stopped and said he had 20 sewing machines that he would send and hinted about electricity. Then he said they could send a sewing teacher! If the women take this program, they could then receive a certificate and possibly get employment!! We then talked about the grave issues surrounding maternal health. When I told him my dream was to have a midwifery program here, he became almost animated and showed tremendous interest. He talked non-stop about the barriers preventing improvements in maternal health and completely agreed that this is exactly what's needed. I hate to get my hopes up since they've been dashed so many times but maybe..... Then we went down for him to accept the food. We also decided to send vitamins (50,000). He opened the first box and of course, checked the expiration - and realized this wasn't just left-over junk that we had sent. He was so impressed!! THANK YOU BEATRICE!! I then introduced him to Deena and she explained the food and how it is packaged. He was incredulous. I stood there thinking of all the people who made this moment happen; all the families in Toledo who cared enough to do those packings and ALL the time that the KAH group put into this project. As with anything else, the good you do goes so much farther than you know. Yes, the food will feed many but maybe more importantly, that act of mercy opens doors for many more possibilities.

Earlier in the day, we heard that the 23 year old son of Jose (the community leader in Pueblo Nuevo) had a motorcycle accident last Friday and that his hip was broken. Also, found out that the nephew of the pastor of the church where all the KAH food is stored for free was having a problem. He too had a motorcycle accident last year and is paralyzed from waist down. Because of immobility, he has developed a "bedsore" on his tailbone. It had become infected and the doctors were talking about putting in a colostomy to keep stool away from it. We went to visit both at the hospital last night. Turned out that the broken hip was really a broken femur and we're not sure if the man even needs surgery. He hasn't seen a doctor for 4 days and he's lying there in this filthy bed with no pillow or sheet. He actually walks with a walker in pain to go to the bathroom as he waits to have surgery that he may not even need! I have the fortune of having an orthopedic surgeon friend at home who was very helpful last night and gave us some ideas of how to proceed.

Sadly, the other boy's story was truly heartbreaking. His "bedsore was actually a cavernous decubitus that extended all the way into his anus so his feces just leaks out around the huge infected area. He too laid in a dirty bed. 2 other men shared the room with him and there were probably 50 visitors in the room which was about 100 degrees. They've been waiting for surgery for 5 days and he continues to lay flat on his back as the bacteria enjoy the filth. The doctor told the family that they had to decide if they get enough money to pay for the colostomy bags (300 quetzal every days which about a week's salary for many) or else they wouldn't do the surgery. The government says there is free health care!! I told him it would be easy for us to send the bags and they were SOOO grateful. I almost cried think how ridiculous it was that we would even be talking about this as this poor beautiful child was laying there in this condition and his mother wondered if he'd even be alive by the end of the week.

Puja and I left pretty depressed. When we came back, we all had out evening meeting sitting on a dock on the beautiful lake outside our hotel. We ate our ice cream and laughed about silly things. Then we started talking about it all, searching each other's hearts for answers. Seems like each day, there's someone in the group who is the encourager. We often wonder how Gaby is able to cope with people like us observing these things about her country. She grew up in this country of seeming hopelessness and yet, she is one of the most hopeful people I've ever met. Her faith in God is so complete and beautiful as it is with Ismael and Orphe.

For all of this week, I know we are once again changed and brought more fully to know the love of God. We see His mercy and we surely feel His plea to love and care for those in need. Every day here we have so many opportunities to give of ourselves. Is it just because we wake up each day looking for that?? Do we do that enough at home?? We have grown so close as friends this week and while there is great sadness, there is also great peace. I guess this is what Christ talks about when he says "love one another."

Anne

Letter #7

So many times we have wondered if all our efforts are worth it. Things that happened today are hard to fully describe but clearly confirm that yes, it is so worth every dollar, every hour, every prayer.

We woke up to an email from a friend of Coral's saying that a terrible tornado had hit her children's school - no other information so we all panicked a bit. Then we heard about all the destruction in Toledo and we pray all is well with you all there. I'm sure this must have been very frightening.

We first went to the bodega where all our meds and supplies are stored. Ismael and his family had clearly spent HOURS arranging and organizing everything and they even put their OWN air conditioner in there so we wouldn't be in such a sweat when we're working there!! He said they couldn't afford the electricity for the air conditioner anyway and they wanted us to enjoy it. Remember that it is about 110 degrees here today with the humidity!

I could have cried at his constant generosity. He and his family never stop amazing me with their goodness and their undying faith and love for God.

Then we drove out to Pueblo Nuevo where everyone was gathered for our worship service. All 4 pastors from the various churches came together to worship at the school. This was a huge accomplishment - just to have 4 different "types" of Christianity come together for the good of the community and to really know the true message of Christ instead of the conflict in churches we often see here and of course, in the U.S.

The service was incredible. There were 3 beautiful bible passages which were so appropriate - mainly that we cannot see God so we can only know His love through each other and the story of the vine and the branches. It was a beautiful message and I can't adequately tell you the things that were said about our efforts here. One pastor talked about how he came to our clinic when we first had a short visit 3 years ago. He pulled eyeglasses out of his pocket that we had given him and talked about how they changed his life because now he can read his bible and they have become a second pair of eyes to show him the true goodness of life in God. I often wondered if all those glasses we gave out were still being used. I almost cried!

They asked me to talk so I talked about how we are not here to serve them to serve each other: I talked about how we have so much materialism in the U.S. but we also lack many things of the Spirit and it is in this service that our lives are fulfilled and we are made complete in each other.

We sang and hugged together and I thought about how much things have changed since we first came here. More gardens are going in and the adolescents are so receptive to improving things.

We met with the women of the community afterwards and talked about the food and vitamin program. Beatrice, you'll be happy to know that the children are receiving their vitamins each day and the families are so grateful! The food is so appreciated and we talked about ways to get it to the pre-school children. The women have formed a committee to work on this.

Coral and her girls and Melinda started one of the weaving projects with the adolescents and children. They were mesmerized and we had to pull them away from it at the end of the day!

Deena continues to be our voice - she enlightens us constantly about so many things here. Gaby has joined right in and is an invaluable translator and missionary! Alex and Lyndsey are obviously global health changers in the making!

We spent a couple of hours setting up the clinic for tomorrow. Between all our meds and supplies and ultrasound, nebulizer and colposcope, it's a clinic comparable to none other in Guatemala! Again, I thank so many of you who have made this possible. Chetti, the women are so grateful for all the pap results and Jean, THANK you for the recent additions to our supplies - they were greatly needed! Gary, we'll be using all the fluoride treatment - the other aldeas know about them and have requested that we get out to them. Karen, your books are phenomenol - we'll be using them all week. And thank you all for sharing your families. Too many to thank!!

Off to dinner.

Abrazos, Anne

Letter#8

Last few days have continued to be so moving. At times we wonder how these people survive and at other times we wonder how we as Americans survive!

This morning we had our worship service and then one of the families had prepared an incredible meal for all of us. They slayed one of their turkeys for us to eat! You could see they have been cooking for hours and the meal was incredible. I thought about all the love that went into that meal and how at home, we can rarely find the time to do such a kind thing for those we love.

After the meal, the kids had a big soccer game. We had brought jerseys for them. First the boys, then the girls, then the young men.

It was SO much fun watching the game! Kids of all ages played together. There were few rules and no boundaries. The goal of course did not have a net. At home, I get bored watching soccer cause the refs are always blowing the whistle and there's more standing around than playing. Here it was CONSTANT running and laughing and those kids could surely move that ball with head, chest, and BARE feet!! Yes, there was horse poop in different parts of the field but I rarely see such enthusiasm at home! When the boys played, ourselves and the girls acted as cheerleaders screaming "Queremos goal! Queremos goal! (We want a goal). They taught me some cheerleading moves and they seem to crack up at my height! Even Kettie and Puja played in the game. There were no soccer moms to gossip at the sidelines and no parents screaming at the coach. Somehow it seemed more like how life should be.

Yesterday, some of the group went to visit the ruins in Tikal and the rest of us went to a water park with 15 of the teen girls who have helped us during the week and who are part of the leadership group that Ismael's wife has started. These last 2 days have been such wonderful opportunities to get to know the teens on a different level and to hear the challenges they face. They've really given us a lot of insight into what we really need to do to provide them with a complete education. There are a few who truly have dreams of going to the university here and I do believe that we're at a point that we can make that happen for them.

After our meetings with the teachers, they totally surprised us with a typed clear cut proposal of what their plan is to get the kids a secondary education. They outlined their strengths and weaknesses and where they want to be. Short and long-term goals were discussed and a reward system was set up for the children. They will start taking attendance and expect the children to be punctual. 4 of the young boys even volunteered to be in charge of sweeping the classrooms at the end of the day and making sure that the lunch plates are cleaned. Specific goals for character building and improved behavior were written. At the end of the month, the children who meet the standards will be allowed to borrow a book. With further progress, we will be providing them with a solar light so they can read at night. When Deena outlined the proposal to the children and parents today, there was actually applause! This may seem minor but down here, it is monumental.

Randy was sleepless most of the week coming up with wonderful ideas to improve the school including an area with an improved stove for cooking the KAH food, a composting area, an additional classroom and shelving for the books. Deena already has someone in mind to come down in Sept to help with building picnic tables so the children are not eating on the ground or in their classroom.

Our clinic has been running so smoothly. Becky and Melinda screen the patients initially getting their basic histories as well as their weights, blood sugars, blood pressures and urine checks. Although Becky is still a nursing student, she acts like a pro and is so thorough and helpful. Melinda runs a tight ship and keeps the patient flow going. I have to watch her though or she sneaks out to play with the kids!!

Puja is now fluent in "gynecology" Spanish. She is clearly in love with all the children and I'm expecting to find one in her bag when she gets home (probably a dog also!). She and I figured out her career path this morning. It was a little complicated since she's hoping to stamp out disease, maternal and early childhood death around the world. She'd also like to eliminate ALL inequality for women!!

Kettie has also perfected her gynecology skills and has now pledged to become fluent in Spanish by next year. She is a joy to be around and somehow all these "young ones" seem to be best friends. It's hard to imagine they didn't even know each other last week.

Benjamin is truly a major film director in the making! Every time I look up, I see a camera strategically placed under chair surreptitiously filming the most moving events of the day.

He is incredibly spontaneous and insightful. Tonight at dinner, he convinced Gaby and Puja to dance with him while we were being serenaded with Guatemalan music!

Gaby probably won't be able to leave the Peten - if the children here don't kidnap her, we will! I feel like I've known her all my life. She spent hours preparing a beautiful sermon at our worship service this morning. Her words so clearly expressed the love of God and she moved us once again to realize that there will be no success without Him.

Randy, Coral, Lindsey and Alex left this morning. We miss you so much! We thought of you all day today. Highlight of the day happened after our meal at Abalino's house. There is a young woman here who has a child with a major neuromuscular disorder. The 2 year old will never walk and has almost no muscle tone. The mom has to carry her constantly which makes it almost impossible for her to do anything else. We bought her a good stroller and she just happened to be Abalino's sister-in-law and came there after our meal. She was not expecting this gift and the whole family was so joyous - all for a simple stroller. Can you imagine?

On a sad note, the son of the community leader (Jose) had a bad accident on Friday night. He broke his hip and is currently in San Benito Hospital. The only "trauma surgeon" comes on Thursday so he is laying there in agony until then. I can't imagine that they will be able to successfully do this kind of surgery here so please, keep him in your prayers. Yet, I see so many miracles here - perhaps there will be an answer.

Tomorrow we're going to a neighboring village to apply the fluoride treatment to 250 children. They have been receiving the vitamins and KAH food and we're going to make sure that that program is working well.

THANKS to all of you again and again. I am so constantly aware that it took the generosity of so many of you to make these things happen here.

OK, enough. Good night!

Anne

For those of you who have worked with us over the last few years, just want to share with you some of the incredible accomplishments that continue! We really feel that God is in our presence.

The clinic really feels like home. There is so much enthusiasm from the community. Several of the adolescents are working with us keeping all the patients in order, helping us keep good records, just generally being so helpful. Tomorrow a couple of them will work with us in the rooms. Sometimes it's hard to believe some of the stories that I hear but they are indeed true!

Coral has been truly amazing. I saw a patient today with plantar fasciitis and was about ready to tell her there was nothing much we could do. Then Coral springs into action and makes a form fitting splint for her out of casting material. She can wear this at night and it will get rid of her pain! Coral proves over and over to be a true wilderness doc!! She seems to be able to have an answer for every patient. She saw a young girl with a very complicated, sad story at the end of the day and I could see the deep emotions that the situation was stirring in her. She has so much compassion and love. Her girls have become a vital part of this trip. Most importantly, they are setting a wonderful example of responsibility and generosity to all the young people of this community. They NEVER complain and are always

available to do anything - and they do it in a quiet, giving way. They have been teaching music in the school, working in the pharmacy at the clinic and they constantly keep us laughing!

Randy and Ismael are our guardian angels, quietly running around taking care of everything. When the generator broke down (meaning no electricity for the ultrasound and colposcopy), Randy had it fixed in a few minutes. There might have been a riot otherwise with people having traveled 2 hours by horse!! He also figured out what the issues are with the water from the well today and he's already working on an answer.

In addition to always keeping the group laughing and in peace, Melinda has been running the pharmacy. It's pretty nice to actually have someone who knows all about meds to be running it!! She continues to work hard to shame me into resuming my running career!

Deena once again is central to all our efforts. Coral and I begin tormenting her at 7AM each morning as we try to suck all the Spanish we can out of her head! She's like a cultural anthropologist trying to understand these people and explain them to us! The success we have had in the school is greatly because of her.

And Gaby is of course everything that Melinda described in her letter. She has had so many opportunities to share God's love with people in truly desperate situations. And she is so good at keeping focus on Him throughout the day.

We had an incredibly insightful and productive meeting with the teachers this evening. We invited them to dinner and 3 out of 4 came including the director. By the end of the dinner, we had everyone convinced that in the next year, Pueblo Nuevo is going to be the best school in the Peten. I'm really not kidding! Apparently, there is a program here that awards schools for achievement and now that they see that they are getting support and encouragement, they are so enthusiastic. Already today, great changes were being made. They are working with Deena and Randy this week to set up some short and long term goals.

This work is really convincing me that with God, you can indeed move mountains!

Abrazos,

Anne