



A Partnership of



**Holy Family Parish
in Stow, Ohio**

and

**Sociedad Amigos de
los Niños in Honduras**

with the support of Saint Vincent DePaul Parish in Cleveland, Saint Clarence Parish in North Olmsted, Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Wadsworth and Archbishop Hoban High School, Akron

A January 15 – 22, 2014 Honduras Medical Mission Diary

By Father Mike Ausperk

In mid-June I made contact with Mae Cruz of Sociedad Amigos de los Niños in Honduras to set the dates for the January 2014 medical mission. Mae coordinates many groups from the US and Canada each year working the Sociedad calendar. Our mission was scheduled for January 15-22, 2014. I began to advertise this wonderful opportunity of service at the parishes involved and in an email to my Honduras email list. I also contacted Jason Horinger of Archbishop Hoban High School in Akron to again invite students from the Honors Spanish classes to join us as interpreters.



Once again Mary Jane Coleman offered to chair the 'Banquet of the Clam' leading a hard-working committee of very generous people. The clambake was held on Sunday, September 22 again at the St. Clarence Church Pavilion in North Olmsted thanks to the generosity of Fr. Neil Kookoothe. With 380 people in attendance, lots of auction items were received and lottery calendars were sold to help raise funds.

Thankfully the 'Banquet of the Clam' was very successful. The great weather helped make the event enjoyable and fun for everyone. Many generous people donated items or services to the silent auction. A good amount of the hard work was done by those who assisted in food preparation and serving. Special

thanks to Maureen Hudak, Trista Piccola, the DeCrane grill team and many committee members for making the event run smoothly. Once again, the clambake raised a very helpful amount...more than \$22,000 which again kept the 'donation' by each member of the medical mission team to \$1,300.00. Considering the costs of the mission continue to rise, especially the airfare, the proceeds from the 'BOTC' were very much appreciated.

Beginning in August, people interested in being on the medical mission team began submitting their application and copy of their passport. By the beginning of October I began working with our lead pharmacist Dan Krinsky to contact various non-profit agencies to obtain the needed medicines, vitamins and supplies so that the 'pharmacy angels' could begin de-packaging, counting, bagging and labeling at Holy Family between October to January...a project that helps us greatly when we arrive in Honduras to begin our brigades immediately, unlike some other groups who have to organize their supplies the first day in Honduras. The medicines and supplies came from the Catholic Medical Mission Board in New York City, AmeriCares in Connecticut, Blessings International



and Ritzman Pharmacies in Wadsworth. The Charity in Action group at St. Clarence Parish in North Olmsted provided more than 3,000 toothcare kits each with a toothbrush and toothpaste and was a great help preparing meds and vitamins, especially Dennis Calsin who moved the items between Stow and North Olmsted and back again. The Holy Family Parish Girl Scouts and Brownies made gift bags for children with toys and other goodies in them. Sharon Printing printed our patient forms.



The medical mission team was made up of 67 people (the most ever) with various levels of medical knowledge, expertise and mission experience and all with good hearts hoping to help others in need. I worked with Mae Cruz of Sociedad Amigos de los Niños, the organization Holy Family Parish has a

partnership with to provide an annual medical mission to the poorest of the poor in rural and mountain villages east of the capital Tegucigalpa. Mae and I worked on various aspects of our stay: accommodations, transportation, room assignments, supplies we need in Honduras, etc.

On Sunday, January 12, 2014 the team members and their families gathered at Holy Family Church in Stow for the 11:30 am Mass. At the end of the Mass, I invited the team to come forward to receive a blessing. After Mass, we met in the Szabo Parish Center to pack our 2 suitcases with the medicines, vitamins, toothcare kits, sunglasses and supplies that Dan and his team of workers had prepared. The packing session went very smoothly considering we packed 104 suitcases in under an hour!



On Wednesday, January 15, 38 team members met at Cleveland Hopkins Airport at 4:00 am to check-in. The Hoban students and 7 other team members met at the Akron-Canton Airport to fly through Atlanta to meet us in Honduras. Most everyone had 2 suitcases full of medicines and supplies with their personal items packed in their carry-on luggage. United Airlines allows 1 suitcase to be checked for our international flight but charges \$40 for a second suitcase, which cost more than \$1,400 this year. Our plane departed for Houston shortly after 6:00 and we arrived in Houston for a very brief layover. Our flight from Houston took off about 9:20 and at 12:05 pm, following a very smooth landing in the bowl of Tegucigalpa (the capital of Honduras), we were greeted by sun and 78 degrees. The Hoban students who flew Delta from Akron to Atlanta to Honduras and Dr. Carlos Saavedra who flew from Miami arrived shortly after we did; we met up with them in baggage claim. We then met Mae and Cato (one of our Honduran translators and a pickup driver) as we accounted for our suitcases, 11 suitcases were still in Atlanta, not making the connection (they would arrive the next day). After the suitcases were packed in a truck for transportation to our guest quarters, we were on our way.



With everyone aboard 3 buses and 2 pickup trucks, we left the airport about 2:30 pm. Traveling east of Tegucigalpa for an hour, we arrived at Nuevo Paraiso about 3:45. Our suitcases were taken to a 'pharmacy' room near the chapel to be unpacked and organized while we made our way to the dining room for a 'snack' of watermelon, tomato and cucumber salad and pasta salad. We then spent time unpacking our personal items and the suitcases of meds and vitamins. At 6:00 we gathered in the Chapel for Mass in Spanish for our team and a large number of children and adults from the children's homes nearby. The singing was led by the choir of children who had been practicing for days, they were so happy to do this for us. Ten servers in red cassocks and surplices assisted me at Mass, they are so reverent and attentive. It made me feel very special; I've never had that many servers at Mass. After Mass, I led a quick intro meeting in the Chapel about health, safety, the 'quiet zone' and the next day's brigade assignments. At 7:15 dinner was served in the dining room: BBQ chicken, mashed potatoes, salad, rolls and papaya. It was a very windy night and cool...freezing to the Hondurans!

"This trip was one of the most unexpected eye openers I have ever had. The people of Honduras and the people on the mission truly touched my heart!"

Katie Buzzelli

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On Thursday, January 16 we gathered in the dining room at 7:30 am to pray our daily Medical Mission prayer which we prayed each morning asking God's blessing on us, on the people we were going to serve that day and those who were supporting us back at home. Breakfast that morning was scrambled eggs, pancakes and watermelon. Cereal, juice and coffee are available at breakfast every day. We loaded our 2 pickups and 3 buses by 8:30 to travel 15 minutes to nearby Guadalajara, a village we have used as our first brigade day for a few years, a village that is close and small to get our team working well together. Working triage, taking initial information, blood pressures, temperatures and sugar screenings, nurse Harpo Chambers worked with interpreter Suzanne Plescia, Hoban students Maddie Beban and Travis Pero assisted nurse Diana Harvey, nurse and Mentor Fire Chief Rich Harvey was assisted by Hoban students Ben Easton and Felicia Bisconti, nurse Meredith Houghton was helped by Hoban students Patty Constantine and Matt McGee, interpreter Diane Howard was teamed up with nurse Melissa Kraus, EMT Jen Oleksy was assisted by Hoban students Marianne Dannemiller and Tyler Wallace, nurse Jen Rhodes was helped by Hoban students Tess Davey and Rodrigo Pereira, Hoban student Katie Frego and Honduran Hugo Diaz assisted nursing student Leah Schiely and EMT Buzz Seiple was helped by Hoban students Alyssa Tarr and Shane Wiedt. Lead nurse Bob Plona guided Hondurans to the nurses and saw patients as well when he could.



Offering patients exams were Dr. Carlos Saavedra, Dr. Sara Guerrero DUBY, Dr. Mike Tricaso assisted by translator Hoban chaperone and Spanish teacher Katie Buzzelli and Honduran Johan, Dr. Ellen Kempf assisted by translator Mae Cruz, Dr. Jeff Kempf was assisted by Jonathan Ramos, Dr. Nick Bisconti was assisted by interpreter Honduran Luis Diaz, Physician Assistant Dave Iliano was assisted by interpreter Margarita Lopez. Honduran Dr. Claudia Zuniga also examined patients as we are required to have a Honduran doctor on our team to assist the visiting doctors with Honduran medical situations that may be unfamiliar to them. Honduran and medical intern Alberto Torres who has been an interpreter in prior years for us saw also did patient examinations. The Honduran interpreters are college-age students who have taught themselves English and are a valuable help to our team members who do not speak Spanish. We pay each of them a good day's wage to interpret for us.



The dental team was led by Dr. Mike Hoffman who was assisted by his dental assistant Heather Kulcsar and interpreter Fidelma Iammarino. Dr. John Blakemore was assisted by Tina Schiely and interpreter (my uncle) Jack Veasey. Dr. Ken Hudak was helped by dental assistant Libby Knotts and interpreter Josue Rios. Dr. Stephen Stanfield was assisted by Debbie Huff with interpreter Larry Gerbetz. Matt DeGrand and interpreter Claudio Paz assisted Dr. Freddie Wilkes. Christy Horner and Irene Blakemore assisted by sterilizing the dental instruments while Sally



Benjamin and Sam Yetzer helped with patients and other duties in the dental clinic.

The pharmacy team was led by pharmacists Dan Krinsky and Ginny Hoffman. They were assisted by pharmacists Dale English and pharmacy students Amy Antibus and Patrick Divoky along with Chris, Tricia and Katie Easton with translators Hondurans Cato, Pedro and bus drivers Hondurans Armando and Jorge. Nancy Walker Gerbetz distributed more than 300 pairs of eye glasses as recommended by the doctors; each child was given a book in Spanish for their reading. Drew Tricaso took photos and video of the brigades. Trista Piccola ('Numero Dos') assisted with crowd control making sure the Hondurans were in the right line or getting them to the right place and with patient registration. Hoban Chaperone Jason Dzik helped make sure people were in the right lines and entertained the children with card and magic tricks. Jim McClarnon and Jim Schiely stayed at Nuevo with Honduran Daniel Matus wiring a new gazebo with electricity and lights, a project paid for by some extra funds we had to make some improvements at Nuevo Paraiso.



By 9:15 patients were being examined. Mae called Delta Airlines in Teguc and found out the 11 suitcases that had been left in Atlanta were at the airport in the capital, Cato drove to the airport to get them. By 3:30 pm we finished seeing patients and left Guadalajara for Nuevo Paraiso. At 4:30 those who wished boarded 2 buses for a visit to Flor Azul; Flor Azul is the farm near Nuevo Paraiso that is the home, school and workplace for teenage boys who are orphaned, abandoned or underserved. A soccer game broke out and the Hondurans won. Dinner was served at 7:00: tilapia, rice, salsa, plantain chips and pineapple...still my favorite dinner of the week. After dinner some team members bagged anti-parasite meds and packed the suitcases for the next day. Others spent time visiting or playing cards in the gazebo.

"My joy was being able to help hundreds of people to be able to see, to read. I have worn glasses since the age of 5, and I know what it is like not being able to see up close or distances without the help of glasses. When I look at that sweet little girl's delighted face, and I know I will collect more glasses for next year's mission. And for the children, I would always give them at least 3 pair.

Nancy Walker Gerbetz



On Friday, January 17 we ate an early 6:00 am breakfast of omelets, bacon, toast, avocados and cantaloupe. With a Danli Fire Department escort (our 3rd year in a row) we left Nuevo Paraiso at 7:15 arriving at the Plasencia Cigar Factory at 8:20. By 8:45 we were set and seeing patients who had been waiting for us to arrive. We came to this cigar factory because last year we found out that many people who work at the factory could not come to us because they were working. Mae spoke with the factory manager and he invited us to set up our brigade at the factory to see the employees. A 'brigade lunch' from our kitchen at Nuevo Paraiso was burritos with eggs, beans and cheese or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. By 4:00 we served the last of the patients. Since we were



returning to the factory again the next day, we left the rooms with the desks and chairs setup. At 6:00 we had dinner: roasted pork with onions and peppers, potato slices with cheese, mixed veggies, tortillas, watermelon and papaya. At 7:30 we gathered in the gazebo to hear Mae tell us her story of how she became to be involved with Sociedad and its founder Sr. Maria Rosa. Mae is a remarkable person who has given her life to care for the children of Sociedad, especially the children of Nuevo Paraiso. I joined the Hoban students for some time of reflection about the mission experience and prayer.

On Saturday, January 18 we again ate breakfast at 6:00 am: grilled cheese (the flatest ones ever!), mystery patty (looked like chicken, tasted like fish), avocado and pineapple. We departed Nuevo Paraiso at 7:15 for the ride back to Danli to the cigar factory arriving at 8:30 and set up to begin seeing patients at 8:45, pretty quickly because we left the tables and chairs in the rooms from the day before. The employees were invited to bring their children and family members to the brigade at the factory. I remembered I had asked the Hoban students to prepare some brushing demonstrations in Spanish; so they began offering those to people waiting in line to see the doctor. After their 3 minute demonstration some of the Honduran people even applauded them. We departed Danli with the thanks of the cigar factory managers. Dinner was served at 6:00: shredded beef, rice, a tomato, cucumber and onion salad, tortillas and fruit. After dinner some socialized in the gazebo.



On Sunday, January 19 we ate breakfast at 6:30 am: scrambled eggs, cheese quesadillas, beans, pineapple, cantaloupe and watermelon. At 7:45 we left on our buses for an hour ride toward Teguc for the 9:00 Mass at the Basilica of our Lady of Suyapa. There is always great music, the priest mentioned our group at the beginning of Mass, the Sacrament of Confirmation was given to 25 people, newborns were held up by the priest and presented to the congregation and then gave our team a special blessing after Mass with a dousing of holy water with a small mop! After a visit to the chapel behind the basilica, we traveled about 30 minutes to Valley of the Angels to a small resort owned by friends of mine, Neftali and Ibis, for a buffet lunch beautifully presented...vegetable soup, beef and rice, chicken, tortillas, refried beans, tortilla chips and salsa and a large veggie buffet. Mae's phone



rang and it was Jonathan Ramos who had lost track of time at the chapel and missed the bus. Fortunately, he is bilingual and remember Mae's phone number was on the back of his nametag. We sent one of our truck drivers to pick up Jonathan and bring him to lunch. After a short time of soccer playing and visiting, we left for the souvenir shops. By 4:30 pm two buses were on their way to Nuevo Paraiso for dinner of taquitos and soup, the other bus was on its way to Teguc to watch the playoff game between the Seattle Seahawks and San Francisco 49er's on satellite TV at the Fridays restaurant near the mall. By 10:00 the bus of football fans arrived at Nuevo Paraiso.

On Monday, January 20 our breakfast at 7:00 am was scrambled eggs, sausage, refried beans, mantequilla (butter), tortillas and fruit. At 8:15 we left Nuevo for Morocelli, less than 30 minutes away. We began seeing patients at 9:00 using the classrooms around the church, a bit of a logistical challenge. By 4:00 we saw the last patients and packed up our gear and supplies. Before dinner, some of the girls from the teenage girls house at Nuevo made jewelry with some of our team. After dinner the teenage girls from the children's homes sold jewelry and my friend Oscar Valladares sold his Honduran made cigars. At 7:30 we went to the community center near the children's homes for a party of music, dancing and snacks for the children.

"Participating in the mission gave me hope for the poor, knowing that there are many who are doing the Lord's will and serving the people of Honduras."

Chris Easton



On Tuesday, January 21, I celebrated Mass at 7:30 in the Chapel. At 8:00 we ate breakfast: folded ham with cheese inside, egg and hash brown omelets and cinnamon rolls from the Sociedad bakery in Teguc. At 9:00 we began offering exams to the children and staff of Nuevo Paraiso and the boys from Flor Azul. We stopped seeing patients by 1:00. Those who were interested walked, jogged or rode the bus to Montana de Luz, a home close to Nuevo for children with HIV. Dinner was served at 6:30: pasta with a light red sauce, garlic bread, marinated tomatoes with cucumbers and onions and cake. One of the cakes was for Margarita Lopez's birthday at the end of January and the other cake was decorated with the words 'Hoban Rocks'. We offered our thanks and applause to the ladies in the kitchen, our drivers and interpreters.

On Wednesday, January 22 we ate breakfast at 7:30: French toast, watermelon and mangos. After farewells to the children and last photos, we boarded our buses and departed Nuevo Paraiso at 9:15. At 10:15 we made a short stop at Pedro Atala, the children's homes operated by Sociedad in Teguc. Sr. Maria Rosa surprised us by being there to thank us and let us take pictures. By 10:45 we left Pedro Atala arriving at the airport by 11:00. Everyone checked in, Mae and I paid the exit tax. At 12:15 pm everyone went through security to the gate for the 1:00 departure for Houston. I stayed at Nuevo Paraiso for another week to visit Flor Azul and a new transition home in Santa Lucia for college students preparing to complete university and be independent. With some extra money left from our medical mission, Holy Family was able to donate the balance of what Sociedad needed to put screens on the Chapel windows and purchase a computer and printer for the new transition house in Santa Lucia, a request of the young men living there who were beyond grateful and excited when I told them we would take care of that request. With some leftover anti-parasite meds, we were able to provide Montana de Luz with the doses they needed for the children and staff there. I also had the chance to visit with friends I have made at Nuevo Paraiso and to rest after a very busy week and a full six months of planning for a most successful brigade.



Muchas gracias to all who helped in any large or small way to make the 2014 medical mission a great success touching the lives of more than 3,000 people with no access to healthcare or medical professionals and making a difference in many lives.

| | Thursday Jan 16, 2014 | Friday Jan 17, 2014 | Saturday Jan 18, 2014 | Monday Jan 20, 2014 | Tuesday Jan 21, 2014 | TOTALS |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------|
| Village | Guadalajara | Plasencia Cigar Factory, Danli | Plasencia Cigar Factory, Danli | Moroceli | Nuevo Paraiso | |
| Medical Exams | | | | | | |
| Adults | 233 | 637 | 318 | 439 | 101 | 1,728 |
| Children | 344 | 6 | 464 | 398 | 189 | 1,401 |
| Total Medical | 577 | 643 | 782 | 837 | 290 | 3,129 |
| Dental Exams | | | | | | |
| Adults | 38 | 78 | 69 | 70 | 7 | 262 |
| Children | 41 | 0 | 85 | 47 | 40 | 213 |
| Total Dental | 79 | 78 | 154 | 117 | 47 | 475 |
| Teeth extracted | 85 | 70 | 198 | 211 | 12 | 676 |
| Scripts | 1,823 | 2,912 | 3,255 | 3,445 | 1,002 | 12,437 |

Photos are available at www.holyfamilystow.org/honduras.php