



## 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 16– 23, 2019 Honduras Medical Mission Diary – 14<sup>th</sup> Year**

By Father Mike Ausperk

In late June 2018, Mae Cruz of Sociedad Amigos de los Niños in Honduras and I began exchanging emails to plan for the 2019 Honduras Medical Mission. Mae is the International Group Coordinator for Sociedad and is the contact with many groups from the US and Canada. We set our medical mission for January 16-23, 2019. I emailed my Honduras contacts which number over 300 people, those who have traveled and those who have ever expressed an interest in the medical mission and advertised in our partner parish bulletins. We have invited Honors Spanish students from Archbishop Hoban High School to join us to serve as interpreters for the last 8 years. This is a great help to us and a good learning practical experience for the students.

Mary Jane Coleman formed a committee to begin working on the large fundraiser we've had the last 6 years, the 'Banquet of the Clam'. Helping MJ were Sally Benjamin, Denise Lazzaro, Jim and Tina Schiely, Brian O'Malley and many other hard-working people. The BOTC was held on Sunday, October 21 at the St. Clarence Church Pavilion in North Olmsted thanks to the generosity of Fr. Neil Kookoothe. With almost 200 people in attendance, great food was served and raffles and auctions were held to help raise necessary funds for procuring of medicines, vitamins, cough and cold medicine, toothbrushes and toothpaste, anti-parasite meds and other needed items.

Again, the fundraiser was more successful than the Cleveland Browns that day. Many generous people donated items or services to the silent auction. Lots of hard work was done by those who assisted in food preparation and serving. The BOTC raised a very helpful amount of a little more than \$10,000 which meant the 'donation' by each member of the medical mission team was \$1,500 this year. Airfare and some costs in Honduras have increased in the last few years.

Veteran and new team members applied and signed up to be on the team between August and October. Dan Krinsky and I began working on what we would need for our brigades, applying to various non-profit organizations. The medicines and supplies came from the Catholic Medical Mission Board in New York City, AmeriCares in Connecticut and Blessings International in Oklahoma.

The vitamins were purchased in bulk. 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. Ladies from St. Clarence parish in North Olmsted donated 300 handmade dresses for the children. Then the 'pharmacy angels' from NEOMED, Holy Family and St. Clarence began de-packaging, counting, bagging and labeling between October and January – this prep work helps us greatly when we arrive in Honduras to begin our brigades immediately (unlike some other groups who organize their supplies the first day in Honduras). Many NEOMED pharmacy students assisted by packing vitamins in one day! The Holy Family Parish Girl Scouts and Brownies made gift bags for children with toys and other goodies in them. A number of people made and gave me Rosaries to distribute. Holy Family School Librarian Chris Krinsky (Dan's wife) purchased 50 bilingual books to distribute with proceeds from the annual Holy Family School Book Fair. Sacred Heart School in Wadsworth had a 'grub day' and donated more than \$300. Many people and organizations made monetary donations to assist with the costs of the medical mission.

*"Living among the Honduran people taught me what it means to be selfless, to show love through actions, and to have hope for a brighter future."*

*- Becca Kubick*

The medical mission team was made up of 70 people with various levels of medical knowledge, expertise and mission experience and each with a mission-spirited heart hoping to help others in need. Mae and I continued to work on details of the medical mission: brigade sites, personnel, accommodations, transportation, room assignments, meals, supplies, funds, etc. The political situation in Honduras had calmed down quite a bit compared to last year so there was less in the news which led to less concern amongst the group.

On Sunday, January 13, 2019 team members and their families gathered at Holy Family Church in Stow for the 11:30 am Mass. After Communion, Pastor Father Paul Rosing blessed the team members and the wooden cross made in Honduras given to each of them as a reminder who sends us to Honduras. After Mass, we met in the Szabo Parish Center to pack a suitcase (some people were asked to pack 2) with the medicines, vitamins, toothcare kits, eyeglasses, sunglasses and supplies that Dan and his team of workers had prepared. The packing session went very smoothly considering we packed 80 suitcases in about 25 minutes (a new record!). On Monday, January 14, Mae called to tell me she was not going to be able to join us in Honduras. She was visiting family in Los Angeles and due to a problem with the US Embassy in Honduras and probably the government shut-down, her US passport had to be re-issued

and it was taking a lot longer than they had first told her it would be done. She was very upset and frustrated. Her sister Doris would assist us in Mae's absence (if that is possible...but Doris did a great job for us!)

On Wednesday, January 16, team members met at the Akron Canton Airport and the Cleveland Hopkins Airport at 4:30 am. Other team members traveled from Louisville, Boston and Orlando to meet us in Houston for our flight to Honduras. The Hoban group flew out of Akron Canton to Atlanta and then Tegucigalpa. Suitcases full of medicines and supplies were checked as luggage and team members' personal items for the week were packed in their carry-on luggage. A great expense is the cost of checking the suitcases. Some have suggested meds and supplies be shipped ahead of time. I have heard of a number of groups who do this and have no meds or supplies when they get to Honduras. Though checking bags is expensive, we have what we need when we get there.

*"I realized my true purpose is to be out there, using my gift to help those who cannot help themselves."  
- Oleksandra Kovalenko*

After a de-icing delay in Akron, de-icing and medical emergency in Cleveland (not with a team member) and a mechanical problem in Houston, the flights landed safely at the airport in Tegucigalpa (called 'Tegus' for short). AMAZINGLY all the suitcases arrived. We met Cato and other Honduran staff members outside baggage claim and after the suitcases were loaded on a truck, we departed the airport at 4:30 pm. It was 82 degrees and sunny when we walked out of the airport. It was in the upper 70's, sunny and dry except for a couple of times of rain.

At 5:45 pm we arrived at Nuevo Paraiso, our base for the week and where the guest quarters are located near some children's' homes that Sociedad operates. Our suitcases were taken to our makeshift 'pharmacy' (a room near the Chapel) to be unpacked and organized. Because it was so late, I decided we would have Mass the next night. At 7:00 pm dinner was served in the dining room: pork, rice, salsa, tortillas, avocados and tangerines. At 8:00 pm we had a brief meeting about life in Nuevo and brigade assignments. After a very long day I was in bed by 10:00 pm.

On Thursday, January 17 we gathered in the dining room at 7:30 am to pray our 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 was scrambled eggs, pancakes and bananas. Juice, coffee, cereal and peanut butter and jelly were available every morning. At 8:30 am the trucks were packed with suitcases of meds and we boarded our buses for Guadalajara, about 10 minutes from Nuevo Paraiso.

Bob Plona oversaw the triage team of nurses and paramedics who took initial patient information, blood pressure, pulse, temperature, glucose screenings and pregnancy tests if advisable. The triage team was made up of nurses and Hoban student interpreters: Irene Bowers with Emma Grosklos and Josh Bisesi, Stacy Collins with Tori Hornacek and Frank Durkin, Diana Harvey with Becca Kubick and Pete Stitzel, Jen Oleksy with Meg Tucci, Sarah Powell with Suzanne Plescia, Tony Satroplus with Jackie Turk and Alaina Merlitti, Buzz Seiple, Hannah Shay with Sadie Salomone and Monica Talmage with Meredith Vieson.

Offering patient exams were Dr. Nick Bisconti paired with interpreter Honduran Doris (Mae's sister), Dr. Dan Butts with Hoban chaperone Pachy Bell, Dr. Jenny Dwyer paired with Honduran Luis Diaz, PA Joan Hayes with Honduran Hugo Diaz, Nurse Practitioner Leah Schiely who is also bilingual, Dr. Sonia Sharma with Honduran Jose Angel Argueta and Rick Baumgartner, Dr. Lance Talmage with Rachel Neugebauer and Nurse Practitioner Megan Wallace with Pedro Caseres. Honduran Doctors Omar Pozas and Alberto Torres (who began as a Honduran interpreter for us 14 years ago) also examined patients as we are required to have at least one Honduran doctor on our team to assist the visiting doctors with tropical medical issues that may be unfamiliar to them. The Honduran interpreters are now adults 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 staffed by Dr. Mark Ford, Dr. Mike Hoffman, Dr. Ken Hudak and Dr. Mike DiMauro with interpreters Hoban student Allison Donatelli, Hondurans Kevin Zazo, Jimi Banegas and Yohan. Tina Schiely, Monica Ickes and Hoban student George Hudak assisted the dentists while Chris Fergus and Joann Wirtz sterilized the dental instruments. With a lot of coordination prior to the trip, Dr. Mike Hoffman had arranged for 2 of our dentists to work out of the Santa Rose de Lima Clinic at Nuevo Paraiso each day where because they have a dental room and equipment, more could be done than extractions. He and Dr. Ken Hudak worked with a small team in Nuevo the first day. Other days would see the other dentists take turns offering dental care in the Clinic.

Dr. Michelle Ford, Dr. Jeff Durkin, Dr. Cindy Rich and Dr. Sabina Ziegelhoffer staffed the eye clinic with the help of interpreters Annabelle Haas, Mary Ann Kolosi, Hoban students Joey Osmun, Alexis Talmage, Evelyn Thoman and Charlotte Turk. Also helping in the eye clinic were Michelle Bisconti, Jim McClarnon, Dale Osmun and Mike Stafford. Thanks to Dr. Michelle Ford and Dr. Cindy Rich who spent months preparing specialty glasses, many people received glasses for the first time in their lives.

The pharmacy team was led by pharmacists Dan Krinsky, Dr. Dale English and Ginny Hoffman. They were assisted by NEOMED pharmacy students Kevin Carek and Sarah Ickes. Dr. Dale English from Sullivan University in Louisville KY invited pharmacy students Olexandra Kovalenko, Many Lauterbach and Purna Patel to work in the pharmacy. Also joining the pharmacy team were Angela Goodhart and Rachel Neugebauer along with Tom Cirner and Jim Schiely. Hondurans Cato and our bus drivers Hondurans Armando, Benjamin and Walter also helped distribute and explain medicines to the patients. Honduran policemen Caceres and Baca provided security. Hoban chaperone Jason Dzik assisted me with forming lines and crowd control. Local community leaders assisted by writing the patient name, age, gender and community info on the patient forms at the registration entrance.

Most of the medical problems the nurses and doctors see are cough, cold and runny nose, dry skin, scabies, lice, high blood pressure, parasites, lower GI problems and vitamin deficiency. Lines of local villagers welcome us each morning when we arrive. We set up quickly and try to begin seeing patients within 15-20 minutes of arrival. Each team member is to bring purified water with them in their water bottle, the purified water is amply available near our guest rooms. They are also to bring granola or energy bars with them for their quick snack break. The meals at our guest quarters are substantial. The kitchen ladies provide about 20 meals for the Hondurans working with us. This all helps us focus on our patients and not on us and what we eat. By 3:00 pm we finished seeing the last patients and returned to Nuevo Paraiso at 4:00 pm. Jim McClarnon, Jim Schiely and Daniel Matus stayed at Nuevo Paraiso to install new street lights, replace photo cells and light bulbs in some street lamps and replace some electrical wire to re-connect electricity to the park where the children often meet with their family or friends.

At 6:00 pm we gathered in the Chapel for Mass and then had dinner after at 7:00 pm: grilled chicken, potatoes with cheese, tortillas and salad. I joined the Hoban students for their reflection which they did each night we had brigades. Pairs of students prepared prayer and reflection questions for discussion in small groups. They then put toothcare kits in shopping bags to prepare for the next day's brigade. Some of the adults played cards and games socializing in the gazebo near the dining room.

On Friday, January 18 at 6:30 am we ate a breakfast of scrambled eggs, beans, avocados, tortillas and cinnamon rolls from the bakery Sociedad operates in Tegus. We left Nuevo Paraiso at 7:30 am for La Villa de San Francisco, about 20 minutes from Nuevo. I had visited this town last year with Claudio Paz who knew the director of the school; he requested we consider having a 3-day brigade at the school. I committed to 2 days (which was more than enough). The school is very large and served the needs of our brigade and the people who came to us very well. We started seeing patients by 8:30 am. By 5:00 pm we departed for Nuevo Paraiso. At 7:00 pm we had dinner: stewed beef, rice, mixed vegetables, tortillas and fruit. During dinner it began to rain pretty heavy and continued for an hour or so. Olexandra Kovalenko's birthday was the next day so I had ordered 3 cakes made in the bakery in La Villa where we had been all day. They bake the cakes in a wood-fired oven. After dinner I invited Olexandra and all of those with a January birthday to come forward, there were 12 people who we sang "Happy Birthday" to. Everyone loved the cake.

On Saturday, January 19 we ate breakfast at 6:30 am: eggs with tomatoes, bacon, hash browns and avocados. We departed Nuevo Paraiso at 7:30 for La Villa Day #2. We began seeing patients at 8:15 am, earlier than the day before because the rooms were still set with the tables and chairs we left. Honduran interpreters Claudio Paz and Josue Rios joined us; they have helped us in the past but now have regular jobs in Tegus so can only help on the weekends. Dr. Ken Hudak and Dr. Mike DiMauro assisted by a small team stayed at Nuevo to work in the Santa Rosa de Lima Dental Clinic doing fillings, a root canal and extractions. We stopped seeing patients at 5:00 pm and returned to Nuevo for dinner at 7: fried chicken, French fries and fruit.

*"I saw the happiness we can give and receive just by showing we care."  
- Tony Satroplus*

On Sunday, January 20 we ate breakfast at 7:00 am: cheese tortilla sandwiches, guacamole, salsa, watermelon and melon. At 8:00 am we left on our buses for an hour and a half ride Tegus to go to the 9:30 am Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of Suyapa (which we couldn't do the year before because of political protests that

blocked some streets in Tegus). At the end of the Mass, the priest recognized our group as helping the poor in many villages, the people applauded. After Mass, we visited the chapel behind the basilica to light candles and then boarded our buses for the 40 minute drive to a small resort where my friends, Neftali and Ibis prepared a huge buffet lunch for us: pork, chicken, rice, tortillas, tasty pupusas, refried beans, tortilla chips and salsa as well as a large veggie buffet and ice cream for dessert. After some relaxing time to visit and rest, we left for the nearby souvenir shops in Valley of the Angels for two hours of shopping. It was in the upper 60's and cloudy with occasional misty rain. By 4:30 pm we were back on our buses heading for Nuevo Paraiso arriving at 5:45 pm. At 7:00 pm we had a light dinner of chicken soup, ham and cheese sandwiches and fruit.

On Monday, January 21 our breakfast at 6:00 am was scrambled eggs, pancakes, cheese and refried beans. At 7:00 am we left Nuevo heading east for Danli arriving at 8:35 at the Oscar Valladares Cigar Factory. Oscar used to drive buses for brigades and always had a dream of having his own cigar factory someday...his dream has become a reality and he is very successful. It began to rain as we setup the brigade in the employee cafeteria. We started to see workers and their families at 9:00 am. The workers are very grateful because they work 6 days a week and have a hard time getting to the doctor. It rained off and on until early afternoon. The factory manager offered 2 tour opportunities for our group so we could continue seeing patients. We also had time to purchase cigars and other items in the small factory store. Oscar appeared during the second tour to lots of hugs from team members who have known him for years. We departed from the factory at 4:15 pm and arrived in Nuevo by 5:30 pm. Dinner was served at 7:00 pm: tilapia, rice, plantain chips, salsa and fruit...still my favorite meal each trip. The Hoban students spent time in reflection in the Chapel. Others played games and socialized in the Gazebo.

On Tuesday, January 22, we met in the Chapel at 7:00 am. Sister Maria Rosa, the 93-year-old founder of Sociedad Amigos de los Ninos, had for days wanted to speak to our group at some point. We set Tuesday morning but because of her age, health and her having to travel from Tegus, I left it a surprise in case it couldn't happen. At 7:00 am we sat quietly for a few minutes until I heard a truck pull in near the Chapel. I went out and greeted Sister. When she entered the Chapel, everyone stood and applauded. Sister spoke for about 45 minutes about her life, Sociedad and the importance of our coming to Honduras to serve the people in need. Sister was very grateful for us and our willingness to serve seeing the face of Christ in others and seeing Christ in them. She also reminded us that Jesus said "Take up your cross and follow me." He did not say "Drag your cross and complain!" Sister gave us her blessing and then stayed for photos. Breakfast was at 8:00 am: egg and hash brown omelets, tortillas and fruit. A large number of our team stayed at Nuevo to offer patient visits to the children in the children's homes, their Tias, the staff and others from the area around Nuevo. Dr. Ken Hudak and Dr. Mike DiMauro and a small staff of our group worked at the Santa Rosa de Lima Dental Clinic. I led 4 doctors, 4 nurses, 6

interpreters and 6 pharmacy team members on a 30-minute bus ride to El Zarzal near Yuscaran to setup a brigade in the Episcopal Church but sponsored by the Catholic Community of El Zarzal. For years, the Catholic Community leader has tried to get a brigade to visit but has been unsuccessful...until this year. She was overjoyed at our coming to her community and couldn't stop thanking us. We began seeing patients at 9:45 am. We were asked to make a house call to Listenia, a 78-year old woman who is homebound. Dr. Dan Butts, interpreter Pachy Bell and Sarah Ickes from our pharmacy team were more than up for this adventure. They had a 20-minute walk uphill a good part of the way. Listenia has skin cancer over a good part of her face and head and is in great pain. She spoke of her faith and the great support she receives from the people in the community. She was very grateful for the comfort, care and medicine she received and offered her prayers for our team. When we were done seeing patients at 2:30, the Catholic Community leader thanked us again and again and invited us to come back again. Cato made arrangements for us to get a 20-minute tour of the Guaro Factory in Yuscaran. Guaro is an alcohol made from sugar cane only in Yuscaran. Though some of the production is automated, there is still much that is done by hand. As we got closer to Nuevo, we stopped in Ojo de Agua to purchase Guaro for all to taste, the Hondurans mix it with Fresca so it's sort of like a Honduran Margarita. We arrived back at Nuevo at 4:30 pm where the group that had stayed were just finishing up their patient visits, they had been very busy. The pharmacy team began the huge task of packing 60 suitcases we would leave in storage until next year. Dinner was at 6:00 pm: stewed beef, rice, tortillas and plantains. During dinner, we thanked our Honduran staff of interpreters, drivers, security, kitchen ladies and housekeepers and gave them their pay or tips. At 7:00 pm we hosted a party for the children from the children's homes with music, dancing, soda pop and a cupcake. At 8:00 pm we gathered in the Chapel for some reflections on our brigades and the Honduran people, thanked the groups that made up the medical team and went over the next day's departure information. At 9:00 pm some gathered for games and socializing in the Gazebo. After the Hoban students returned to their dorm rooms at the Clinic, Dr. Omar invited Jackie Turk, Tori Hornacek and Meredith Vieson to visit with a woman in labor in the Clinic's Labor and Delivery room. After hours of conversation, hand-holding and trying to stay awake, healthy Christopher was born at 4:00 am. The 3 students will never forget their witness to the birth of new life at a clinic in the middle of rural Honduras.

On Wednesday, January 23 we ate breakfast at 8:30 am: scrambled eggs, ham, tortillas, refried beans and fruit. After farewells to the children and staff and some last group photos, we boarded our buses and departed Nuevo Paraiso at 9:15 am. We arrived at the airport at 10:45 and began to check in for departure. After delays due to weather in Atlanta, all arrived at their destinations safely with many happy memories of their week in Honduras.

As has become my custom, I stayed at Nuevo Paraiso for another week to spend time in Danli with Oscar visiting his cigar box factory and coffee plantation, visiting local families, getting my hair cut for \$2 in La Villa (I gave him more \$ as a tip), visiting Santa Lucia to see some young people who used to live in Nuevo, celebrating a couple of birthdays, writing this diary and relaxing. At the request of the nurse at Nuevo Paraiso and the school director in La Villa de San Francisco, I was able to deliver to each of them a suitcase of children's medicine to use as they needed this school year. With some Holy Family funds leftover, I was able to offer help to 3 families with special needs.

**Muchas gracias** to all who helped in any large or small way to make the 2019 medical mission another great success touching the lives of over 3,100 people with no access to healthcare or medical professionals and making a difference in the lives of many Hondurans and us. Over the 14 years of offering medical, dental and eye care, we have seen over 40,000 people, extracted more than 9,000 teeth and filled over 140,000 scripts. Congrats to all of the team members over the years and thanks for your generous and loving service to others in the name of Jesus Christ and His Church! Amen!

	Thursday Jan 17, 2019	Friday Jan 18, 2019	Saturday Jan 19, 2019	Monday Jan 21, 2019	Tuesday Jan 22, 2019	TOTALS
Village	Guadalajara / Dental @ Clinic	La Villa de San Francisco / Dental @ Clinic	La Villa de San Francisco / Dental @ Clinic	Oscar Valladares Cigar in Danli / Dental @ Clinic	Nuevo Paraiso / El Zarzal / Dental @ Clinic	
<b>Medical Exams</b>						
Adults	262	346	360	245	213 / 91 / 0	1,517
Children	302	255	326	97	243 / 66 / 0	1,289
Total Medical	564	601	750	342	456 / 157 / 0	2,870
<b>Dental Exams</b>						
Adults	62 / 17	28 / 24	40 / 22	16 / 26	19 / 0 / 30	284
Children	19 / 45	26 / 39	32 / 8	8 / 9	3 / 0 / 12	201
Total Dental	81 / 62	54 / 63	72 / 30	24 / 35	22 / 0 / 42	485
Teeth extracted	97 / 46	91 / 18	115 / 44	37 / 41	17 / 32	538
Teeth filled	0 / 40	0 / 44	0 / 31	63	7 / 0 / 46	231
<b>Eye Exams</b>						
Eyeglasses	167	221	270	142	172	972
Scripts	2,438	2,909	2,625	1,958	1,497 / 939 / 0	12,366