



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 10– 17, 2018 Honduras Medical Mission Diary – 13th Year

By Father Mike Ausperk

To begin planning for the 13th medical mission to Honduras, Mae Cruz of Sociedad Amigos de los Niños in Honduras and I began exchanging emails in late June 2017. 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 10-17, 2018. 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, Archbishop Hoban High School Honors Spanish students travel with us as interpreters and advertised in our partner parish bulletins.



Mary Jane Coleman who has generously organized the 'Banquet of the Clam' fundraiser in the past and the fundraising committee thought we should try a different menu this year. They decided on an "OktoberROAST" pig roast. Helping MJ were Trista Piccola, Sally Benjamin, Denise Lazzaro, Jim and Tina Schiely and many other hard-working people. The OktoberROAST was held on Sunday, October 15 at the St. Clarence Church Pavilion in North Olmsted thanks to the generosity of Fr. Neil Kookoothe. With over 200 people in attendance, great food was served and raffles and auctions were held to help raise necessary funds.

As has been the custom, 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 OktoberROAST raised a very helpful amount of more than \$12,000 which meant the 'donation' by each member of the medical mission team was \$1,400 this year. Considering the costs of the mission continue to rise, especially the airfare (now close to \$1,000 per person), the proceeds from the OktoberROAST were very much appreciated.

During September and October, veteran and new team members applied to be on the medical mission team by contacting me. 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 have to 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. 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. The Holy Family School 4th grade sponsored a Movie Night/Bake Sale and donated more than \$600. Sacred Heart School in Wadsworth had a 'grub day' and donated \$300.

"I was amazed by the beauty of the people and the country. I don't think I have every been so fulfilled as a physician."

- Dr. Jenny Dwyer

The medical mission team was made up of 72 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. A contested presidential election in Honduras in November led to protests on the streets which kept me more regularly in touch with my contacts in Honduras making sure we would be safe while we were in Honduras.



On Sunday, January 7, 2018 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 85 suitcases in about 35 minutes (a new record!)

On Wednesday, January 10, 16 team members met at Cleveland Hopkins Airport at 4:00 am to check-in for their American Airlines flight through Miami to Honduras. I and a larger group of 45 team members including the Hoban students met at the Akron-Canton Airport to fly Delta through Atlanta to Honduras. Others traveled from Chicago and Louisville to meet us in either Miami or Atlanta. The Jones family from Salt Lake City flew United Airlines through Houston to Honduras. 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. All three airlines now charge \$25 for the first suitcase and \$40 for the second suitcase. I had emailed a request to the airlines asking if any of our suitcase fees could be waived, it was denied. Kelsey Sees from Hoban was able to get a fee waiver for 15.

"Thank you so much for this experience. I'm forever changed." – Taylor Engelhart

The three flights landed at the airport in Tegucigalpa (called 'Tegus' for short) within 2 hours of each other. In all only 3 suitcases were for some reason left behind in Cleveland, they would arrive the next day. It was 82 degrees and sunny when we walked out of the airport. We met Mae and Cato (one of our Honduran interpreters) outside baggage claim. After the suitcases were packed in a truck for transportation to our guest quarters, we were on our way.

We left the airport about 3:45 pm and arrived at Nuevo Paraiso about 5:00 pm to unpack. Our suitcases were taken to our makeshift 'pharmacy' (a room near the Chapel) to be unpacked and organized. At 6:00 pm we gathered in the Chapel for a short meeting to cover health, safety and the next day's brigade assignments. At 7:00 pm dinner was served in the dining room: chicken, French fries, salad with tomatoes and Thousand Island dressing. Some team members bagged parasite meds while the triage nurse team and eye clinic team had a short meeting. After a very long day I was asleep by 10:00 pm.

On Thursday, January 11 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, turkey cubes, tortillas 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. I led 20 team members to Quebrada Grande, Trista ("Numero Dos") led the other 50 team members to Guadalajara, both villages 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 and glucose screenings and pregnancy tests if advisable. The triage team was made up of nurses and Hoban student interpreters: Irene Bowers with Ryan Davis and Olivia Blay, Sean Cody with Victoria Hornacek and Nick Sheldon, Kristin Fortunato with Meredith Vieson and Tristan Wittbrod, Laurie Jones with Chloe Weidrick and Leah Yankovich, Jen Oleksy with Richard Baumgartner and Emma Grosklos, Bob Plona with Allison Donatelli and Jessica Sheldon, Buzz Seiple and Monica Talmage with Andrew Rinaldi and Alexis Talmage.

Offering patient exams were Dr. Carlos Saavedra, Dr. Nick Bisconti paired with interpreter Honduran Hugo Diaz, Dr. Jenny Dwyer paired with Honduran Luis Diaz, Dr. Reshma Eugene who it turns out is bilingual, Dr. Joe Rinaldi was assisted by Hoban grad Ellie Durkin, Dr. Lance Talmage paired with Mae and Hoban grad Carson Miller and Nurse Practitioner Leah Schiely who is also bilingual. Honduran Doctors Omar Bosas and Alberto Torres (who began as a Honduran interpreter for us 13 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. Brandon Jones with interpreters Larry Gerbetz, Hoban students Hannah Finley, George Hudak and Jenna Poor and Honduran Kevin Zazo. Tina Schiely, Gretchen Burbridge, Matt DeGrand and Mike Impagliozza assisted the dentists while Christy Horner sterilized the dental instruments. Brandon and Laurie Jones had traveled with us in 2009 and this year wanted to bring their sons, Nash and Canyon. Nash designed a tooth care presentation in Spanish to encourage children to take care of their teeth by brushing and flossing. He offered it throughout the day on brigade with the help of some Hoban students. It was clever and involved recruiting Honduran children to wear a 'tooth' and stand together while being brushed by a large inflatable toothbrush and flossed with a jump rope. Nash agreed that as he did it more often, it became easier to do and it helped him learn more Spanish.



Dr. Michelle Ford, Dr. Jeff Durkin and Dr. Cindy Rich led the eye clinic with the help of interpreters Fidelma Iammarino, Hoban grad Bailey Booth (who wants to study optometry), Hoban student Charlotte Turk and Honduran Pedro. Also helping in the eye clinic were Michelle Bisconti, Ron Knapp, Jim McClarnon, Joe Turk and Nancy Walker Gerbetz. Mae told us that we are the only medical brigade to offer an eye clinic which explains why the eye clinic is so busy in every village. We brought 1,200 pairs of generic prescription glasses and readers along with 3,000 pairs of sunglasses to give away. Dr. Ford and Dr. Rich prepared many prescription glasses for the more needed prescriptions they have seen over the years (no pun intended!).

The pharmacy team was led by pharmacists Dan Krinsky, Dr. Dale English, Dr. Emily Gaborcik and Dr. Ginny Hoffman. They were assisted by NEOMED pharmacy students Taylor Engelhart and Jen McKay along with Tom Cirner, Elizabeth Grizer, Jane Hutchison,

Canyon and Nash Jones, Jim Schiely and Joann Wirtz. Hondurans Cato and our bus drivers Hondurans Armando, Jose, Benjamin and Walter also helped distribute and explain medicines to the patients. Honduran National Policeman Miguel Oscar and Miguel Angel (brothers) and Casceres provided security. Trista Piccola ('Numero Dos') and Hoban chaperones Mary Bulgrin and Jason Dzik assisted with crowd control making sure the Hondurans were in the right line or getting them to the right place. Hondurans Gustavo and local community leaders assisted by writing the patient name, age, gender and community info on the patient forms at the registration entrance. On this first day it was sunny and 80 degrees.



Most of the medical problems the nurses and doctors see are cough, cold and runny nose, dry skin, scabies, lice, high blood pressure, stomach, parasites, lower GI problems and vitamin deficiency. Long lines of local villagers are lined up and welcome us each morning when we arrive. We set up quickly and try to begin seeing patients within 15-20 minutes of arrival. During a medical and dental exam in Quebrada Grande, the doctors noticed a large white mass in the back of Francisca's mouth. Dr. Hudak strongly recommended that she get it checked out, to him it looked like the beginning of throat cancer. (After the group left, Dr. Omar Bosas was able to give her a referral to a friend of his who is an ENT Doctor in Tegus.) 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 snack or lunch. 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 4:00 pm we finished seeing the last patients and returned to Nuevo Paraiso by 5:00 pm.

At 6:30 pm we gathered in the Chapel for a very special ceremony...the Baptism of Luis Diaz! Luis has been a translator for us and friend to me and many others since our first brigades in 2006 when I found out he had never been baptized, he is 32 years old and his siblings were all baptized, his father never thought he was ready. Last summer Luis told me he was ready to be baptized and he wanted me to do it when we came to Honduras. This was a great honor for me. I was able to send some study materials in Spanish to him through another group traveling to Honduras and received the local pastor's permission. Mae Cruz was honored to be his Godmother. Luis was nervous but certain and sure of his decision. He asked to speak to the group before the Baptism, he spoke from his heart about what Baptism meant to him and how much it meant that we were all there with him. With the tears of Luis, Mae, me and many others we almost didn't need water. It was a joyous time of prayer and celebration. Dinner was served at 7:00 pm: tilapia, rice, salsa, mixed vegetables and plantain chips...still my favorite meal of the week. To celebrate Luis' Baptism, I had ordered tres leches cake which is a special dessert for special occasions in Honduras. Everyone loved it. After dinner some team members got suitcases ready for the next day and then played cards in the gazebo which many team members did each night.



On Friday, January 12 we ate a very early 6:00 am breakfast of scrambled eggs, pancakes and watermelon. We left Nuevo Paraiso at 7:10 am heading west toward Tegus for Guinope, a new town we had never been to before, about a 90 minute ride because more than half of the trip is on a dirt road that is very bumpy. Mae had arranged for us to be in this town for 2 days. We started seeing patients by 9:00 am using the school rooms; it was a very large school that worked well for our brigade. By 4:00 pm we departed for Nuevo Paraiso. At 6:30 pm we had dinner: beef strips, mashed yucca, beans and fruit.

On Saturday, January 13 we again ate an early breakfast at 6:00 am: omelets, bacon, toast and watermelon. We departed Nuevo Paraiso at 7:00 for another long and bumpy ride to Guinope. It had gotten much more windy and cooler overnight, 60 degrees and cloudy. We began seeing patients at 8:40 am. 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. The dentists find a lot of rotted teeth from lack of tooth care and fluoride in the water and too much sugar consumption especially from pop. Some people come to the dental clinic and want their 12 or 14 remaining teeth extracted so they can get the free dentures the government provides which doesn't promote toothcare. At the end of the day, a woman named Denise had 3 teeth extracted. After the extraction she became very anxious and because she hadn't eaten all day, she was shaking. We gave her some Sprite and tried to calm her down. We offered her and her family a ride in one of our trucks but there is no road to where she lives, just a path. We were able to use an office chair to roll her to the road where her friends had a 'taxito' waiting that could take her and her family home on the path. (I found out after the group left that Denise is fine and appreciates our help and concern.) By 4:30 pm we

*"Honduras was the best experience that I have ever had. I met and spoke to people that I would never see or even know if I hadn't gone on the trip."
- George Hudak*

departed Guinope after the town leaders thanked us. Dinner was served at 7:00 pm: spaghetti with meat or tomato sauce, salad and garlic bread. We sang "Happy Birthday" to Reshma Eugene, George Hudak, Jen Oleksy and Leah Schiely, all who had birthdays during our trip and then enjoyed huge chocolate and white cakes made locally in a wood fired oven...imagine!

On Sunday, January 14 we ate breakfast at 8:15 am: fried eggs, French toast and bananas. Everyone was happy with a later start to the day. At 9:15 we left on our buses for an hour ride to Valley of the Angels for the 11:00 am Mass at the Church in the town square. Since there had been a few protests in Tegus the day before and to be safe, our security detail, Mae and I decided this plan would be better than going to Tegus for Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of Suyapa, which we normally do on Sunday morning. The 11:00 am Mass began at 11:35 pm, the homily was offered bilingually in Spanish and English, I'm sure because they saw the large number of us there. After Mass, we boarded our buses for a 40 minute drive to a small resort where my friends, Neftali and Ibis prepared a huge buffet lunch beautifully presented: beef, chicken, rice, tortillas, tasty pupusas, refried beans, tortilla chips and salsa as well as a large veggie buffet. After some time relaxing and visiting, I taunted George Hudak into jumping into the pool (his father had done it last year and it didn't take much coaxing). When he was ready I pushed him in. He didn't stay in very long as the water was really cold and God

knows what was in it bacterially! We left for the nearby souvenir shops for two hours of shopping. By 4:40 pm we were back on our buses heading for Nuevo Paraiso arriving at 5:45 pm. At 6:00 pm we had a light dinner of chicken soup and salad. After dinner at 7:00 pm, I baptized Angel Damian Argueta, the son of former Nuevo Paraiso residents Jose Angel and Betty. Last November they asked me if I could Baptize their son when I was in Honduras...2 in one year, amazing! Leah Schiely of our group and Claudio Paz were Godparents. It was again, another joyous celebration of life and faith.

On Monday, January 15 our breakfast at 6:00 am was scrambled eggs with peppers, onions and tomatoes, sausage, fried plantains and coffee cake from the bakery near Sister Maria Rosa's house in Tegus. At 7:00 am we left Nuevo heading east for Danli arriving at 8:15. We again setup our brigade in a local school. At 5:00 pm we took our group photo and departed by 5:30 pm. Dinner at 7:00 pm was beef, rice and salad.



On Tuesday, January 16, half of the group ate breakfast at 6:00 am: egg and hash brown omelets, tortilla cheese sandwiches, chicken nuggets and watermelon. I left Nuevo with this first group at 7:00 to travel back to Danli to Oscar Valladares' Cigar Factory. Oscar used to drive buses for brigades and always had a dream of having his own cigar factory...his dream has become a reality and he is very successful. The other half of the group ate the same breakfast at 7:00 and was led by Trista setting up their brigade at Nuevo Paraiso to see the children, staff and their families and the people of neighboring villages. It was still cool and windy. The Nuevo brigade was done by 4:00 pm, at 6:00 they visited the children's homes with a snack from our group. We were able to get a tour of the cigar

factory and purchase some cigars. The pharmacy team began the task of sorting meds and supplies, much of which we would store locally in 70 suitcases for next year. The Danli group arrived at 6:45. Dinner was served at 7:00 pm: chicken, rice, salad and fruit. We offered our thanks and applause to our Honduran staff – Mae, the ladies in the kitchen, our drivers and interpreters. At 8:00 pm the medical mission team gathered in the dining room to share some reflections of our experiences of the week's medical brigades, to thank everyone and to review the next day's departure procedures.

On Wednesday, January 17 we ate breakfast at 8:30 am: scrambled eggs, sausage, tortillas, avocados and fruit. After farewells to the children and staff and some last group photos, we boarded our buses and departed Nuevo Paraiso at 10:00 am. With no signs of protesters, we arrived at 11:00 at the airport and began to check in for departure. The United flight to Houston, the Delta flight to Atlanta and the American flight to Miami were all delayed due to weather in Atlanta. The Delta flight from Atlanta to Akron ended up being cancelled. Travelers were put on various flights for their trip to Akron, Dr. Talmage leaving at 9:30 pm. The American flight didn't leave Miami until 11:30 landing in Cleveland Thursday morning at 3:00 am!!!

As has become my custom, I stayed at Nuevo Paraiso for another week to spend time relaxing, visiting with local families, celebrating a couple of birthdays and writing this diary. With some extra funds from our mission trip, Holy Family was able to help some families with special needs and replace street light fixtures, light bulbs and photo cells for safety of the staff and children at Nuevo Paraiso, it's much brighter!

Muchas gracias to all who helped in any large or small way to make the 2018 medical mission a 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 13 years of offering medical, dental and eye care, we have seen over 38,000 people, extracted more than 8,500 teeth and filled over 130,000 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 11, 2018 | Friday Jan 12, 2018 | Saturday Jan 13, 2018 | Monday Jan 15, 2018 | Tuesday Jan 16, 2018 | TOTALS |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------|
| Village | Guadalajara / Quebrada Grande | Guinope | Guinope | Danli | Danli Cigar Factory/ Nuevo Paraiso | |
| Medical Exams | | | | | | |
| Adults | 219 / 87 | 235 | 242 | 389 | 250 / 173 | 1,595 |
| Children | 339 / 115 | 178 | 173 | 357 | 114 / 237 | 1,513 |
| Total Medical | 558 / 202 | 413 | 415 | 746 | 364 / 410 | 3,108 |
| Dental Exams | | | | | | |
| Adults | 2 / 7 | 27 | 44 | 60 | 25 / 20 | 185 |
| Children | 27 / 3 | 31 | 18 | 55 | 15 / 14 | 163 |
| Total Dental | 29 / 10 | 58 | 62 | 115 | 40 / 34 | 348 |
| Teeth extracted | 94 / 20 | 62 | 119 | 173 | 17 / 32 | 517 |
| Eye Exams | 148 / n/a | 124 | 175 | 253 | 205 / n/a | 905 |
| Eyeglasses | 78 / n/a | 124 | 156 | 190 | 179 | 727 |
| Scripts | 1,195 / 891 | 2,036 | 2,409 | 3,946 | 1,895 / 1,755 | 14,127 |

Photos are available at <http://www.holyfamilystow.org/Mission-to-Honduras>