

The Reverend Ed Gustafson, Executive Director, 1993-2003



In 1988 I became the Rector of St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church in Nogales, AZ. When hired I was told that there was a small clinic for children from Mexico that met there, but I didn’t have to become at all involved.

The first Thursday of the following month, November, 1988, The Clinic occurred, and I was totally impressed. It was much smaller than now, of course, but still saw children in need. Very soon I was taking the Church van to the Border to bring children and their families to the Church. That was my involvement for the first year. Then one day a resident student from the University of Arizona College of Medicine approached me and asked if I could help get an MRI for a child. I said, no, that he should see the ladies in the kitchen who handled the money. He said that they had no money. That was the beginning of my real involvement.

I went to talk to the ladies and found that there was no organization whatsoever and the only source of money was what accidentally came in; they were operating on about \$18,000 per year with \$10,000 of that designated for Dan Leal and his orthotics area. It was donated by the Community Fund of the Diocese of Arizona.

In late 1989 I began my chore of development. I found about five folks who were involved, and we formed a Board of Directors. They were: Peggy Cumming, Earl Vance, Marcia Clark, Patricia Martinez, and Adele Sorenson. We met, and I suggested that we incorporate as a separate entity from the Church. Part of that plan was to protect the Church from any law suits. Once incorporated I got us a 501(c) 3 rating from the IRS so that we could raise money on our own.

Next I started fundraising by sending out letters to all the Episcopal churches in the Diocese of Arizona and everyone on our mailing list from the Church. It started to pay off right from the beginning. There were many, many miracles that would take a lot of paper to report, but we doubled our income every year for the next three years. In late 1993 I was hired by The Clinic as its first full-time Executive Director.

Because I had a house in Green Valley and lived there, I moved the office there—first to St. Francis-in-the-Valley Episcopal Church but eventually to a mall where we had larger office space. I was able to recruit many volunteers from the Green Valley community. I was also able to raise a lot of financial support for The Clinic from the good folks there. For instance, one of the largest contributors to The Clinic was and still is The White Elephant, a thrift store in Green Valley.

I wrote a lot of grants, got lots of publicity through newspapers and television, and The Clinic grew. As it grew, we were able to care for more and more children, and do more for them. When I finally retired in 2003 the annual budget was up to \$550,000, and we had gone from three surgeries per year to thirty-five to forty. We also moved from 30-40 children at each clinic to 250.



The late Dan Leal was The Clinic’s first orthotist.