

# CAROLINA HONDURAS HEALTH FOUNDATION

Newsletter - March 28, 2016



Dear Friends of CHHF,

## Medical Referral Program Improves Lives, One at a Time

*"I am sorry, but there is nothing we can do for you."* These are words we never want to hear from a physician. Because of our Medical Referral Program, these are words doctors at the CHHF clinics may be able to avoid. Begun last year, our Board of Directors took a leap of faith for this program, not knowing the number of people needing care nor the cost of this medical care. Now in its second year, doctors no longer are restricted by the specialties on the team. For patients who need advanced care, a referral is completed and sent to the volunteer Medical Referral Coordinator; the process of seeking a referral has then begun.

From a beginning of one medical referral, CHHF now has a database of physicians for whom we can make referrals for pediatric cardiology, pediatric neurology, orthopedic surgery, plastic surgery, ophthalmic surgery, pediatric surgery, and general surgery. In 2015 there were 38 referrals. The program has been so well-accepted by physicians that, in the first three months of 2016, there have been 33 referrals. In February patients were sent for orthopedic surgery in San Pedro Sula where Operation Rainbow was holding clinics. Others in February were sent to Dr. Gordon Robinson at the Coyoles Hospital where he offers plastic surgery twice a year. Several children were referred to Friends of Barnabas for cardiac or neurology issues. Four patients were sent for ophthalmic consultations or surgery. In some cases, the medical care is donated by foundations and doctors from the US; however, most of these patients cannot afford the cost of transportation to the major city where the hospital is located. Often the specialized medical care will be donated after the patient pays for an EKG or a CT scan. Thus, funds are provided to the patient so that this specialized medical care can be obtained.



One story in particular exemplifies the need and the difficulty in receiving care. Baby Jose Daniel was born with cleft lip and palate. Since birth he has had three surgeries. Medical referral funds assist the family with transportation to the hospital; this cost is minimal, about \$100 for each trip. On February 27, his third surgery necessitated repair of the palate with a bonding adhesive. After three days in the hospital, the child was dismissed and made the return four hour trip on the public bus. The bus ride was rough, over roads filled with potholes or wash-board dirt roads. At some point the bonding adhesive dislocated; within two days, infection set in and the baby was very ill. A phone call to our medical referral coordinator resulted in our foundation sending funds for the baby to be taken to a private hospital where specialists could treat the infection and

the dislocation within the repaired palate. This time the cost was more than \$300. This child will need many further surgeries. And he is only one of more than 60 patients in our database who continue to need specialized medical care.

Your donations to CHHF are making a difference in the lives of the poor and needy in Honduras. Without your continued support we cannot provide this specialized care. Our volunteer medical teams pay their own expenses in order to provide care at our clinics free of charge; however, there are many cases for which we are unsuited to meet the medical needs. Please consider a donation to help CHHF continue its work in making a difference in the lives of so many in Honduras.



**Facility Improvements** – Maintenance is a constant need at the clinic. In addition to structural repairs to the building and fence replacement over the winter months, other needs have been addressed.

**Water Supply** – Several teams who have gone to our clinic in the past year have experienced water supply issues, especially in the showers. In October we discovered that the well had insufficient capacity to meet the demands of the clinic. The Limón area has experienced drought conditions in the past few years and, as a result, the water table has lowered. Thus a new well was installed at a depth of 35 feet which is sufficient to meet our needs. In addition, changes were made to the water system to provide potable water to the entire second floor living area. The filtration and chlorination system was reengineered to ensure all of the water going to the upstairs areas was safe for drinking and brushing teeth.



Drilling New Well



Chlorination System



Storage Tank



**New Ford F-250** – As a result of a very generous donation from a supporter, CHHF was able to purchase a new diesel Ford F-250 which was shipped to Honduras. Arriving in early February, after clearing Customs, the truck has now been titled and registered. In April, teams will begin using this new truck which will replace the old Toyota Tundra.

**Patient Benches** – Little things mean a lot. Volunteers at the clinic have all seen the long lines which develop each day as patients wait to be seen by our physicians. Waiting times are measured in hours, not minutes. Earlier this year volunteer John Receveur built a row of benches so that some patients now have a place to sit while waiting.



## Early Team Reports

Our clinic has many repeat volunteers; they see the tremendous need and return again and again. At the end of a week in Honduras each has a renewed appreciation of his personal life as well as a renewed commitment to the betterment of the lives of others.

On January 31 Dr. Joel Edwards and his team of 14 opened the CHHF clinic for 2016. They staffed clinics in Limon, Icoteas, and Whispering Hope, at a church in Punta Piedra and in a school in Plan de Flores. At each location, patients walked long distances to reach the clinics and waited in long lines without complaint. Because our clinic had not been staffed during the rainy season, 1,300 patients came for consultations. During the week, Dr. Edwards did a bit of surgery for young man who had a lipoma, painful and limiting the work he could do. He delivered orthopedic shoes to 4 year old Angel so that he could attend kindergarten. Thanks to Dr. Kenneth Morrison (volunteer with the Caldwell team each year) and Springer Prosthetics and Orthotics in Lansing, Michigan, the shoes were specially made and donated to Angel.



Surgery Patient



Angel's New Orthopedic Shoes

Mid-February saw Dr. Glenn Gunter and his team treating over 700 patients. Ten volunteers and two Honduran physicians were on the Gunter team. In four days they worked at the Limón clinic and also had two remote clinics: Icoteas and Plan de Flores. Setting up a clinic in the Carolina Honduras Health Foundation | P. O. Box 528 | Barnwell, SC 29812 | 803-259-3513 | [www.CHHF.org](http://www.CHHF.org)

school at Plan de Flores was challenging! Doctors and nurses worked at student desks in a classroom; setting up work space for the pharmacy and lab was problematic.



Remote lab



Remote pharmacy

In early March the Hook team staffed the clinic. They saw 770 patients, mostly routine. However, their week was filled with emergencies, at least one a day. Two patients were transported to the hospital. One woman had walked 4 hours from the mountains with her husband and children. Diagnosed with malaria, she was given an IV and chloroquine; after several hours when there was no improvement, doctors recommended transportation to the hospital. The second patient sent to the hospital was a baby only hours old. Born at home in the village and rushed to our clinic because he was not breathing well, doctors worked with the baby, suctioning and trying to make him cry; they made a make-shift oxygen mask and decided on transportation to a hospital with an incubator. When no ambulance was available, the CHHF pickup took the baby, the mother, and one of our doctors for the hour and a half ride over poor roads to the hospital. They later learned that both these emergency patients responded well to hospital treatment.



Patient transported by ambulance



Newborn in respiratory distress

CHHF wants to thank all those who volunteer and those who contribute to support our mission. Together we are making a difference in the lives of thousands of the poor and needy in Honduras. May God continue his blessings on volunteers, donors, and the people we serve.

Sincerely,

N. K. Hook, Jr.  
President