

Guatemala Medical Outreach , January 2008
Journal written by Kathleen Lomando, RN

Hi All,

Well the time is approaching very soon, today, to be exact. For those of you who are not aware I am going to Guatemala on a Medical Outreach Mission for 10 Days. Just as I have done in the past I will try to journal the adventure and if you have received this e mail you have been placed in an email grouping for this trip. This trip, unlike my others in the past, will be part vacation and part volunteer work. I am joining a group of 40 nurses, doctors, medical students and other volunteers from Rocky Vista University and Nova Southeastern University. My suitcases are **almost** packed. We were cautioned/advised of many different things, for instance:

- *Bring plenty of Pepto Bismol
- *Bring food to eat while we are in the mountain villages because there is a scarcity of edible food.
 - * Bring plenty of Pepto Bismol
- * Do not bring jewelry with you
 - * Bring plenty of Pepto Bismol
- * Pack 4 sets of scrubs
 - * Don't forget the Pepto Bismol !
- * Don't bring electrical devices, you will **short out the whole hotel**
 - *Bring Pepto Bismol

Okay you get the idea >>>>> >>> Pepto is MUST!

Before I forget, many thanks to those who donated items for this mission:

Scarlet Ureta: Children Stickers
Michel Guy: Lollipop and University Hospital whistle lights
Nat Goren: North Broward Hospital District: Lighted star pins
Lee Chaykin: University Hospital T Shirts and Medical supplies

Alicia and I have pack all of these items along with the children's clothes, crayons and books we purchased and OF COURSE plenty of Pepto Bismol, to be sure.....We Can take a hint!

Also **many many** thanks to all of you who wished us a safe and successful trip. You guys are the best!

Feel free to e mail me during the trip with any comments or questions you have about Guatemala or the Mission. I will do my best to answer them.

Remember my Motto: "**Adventure before Dementia**"

Love you all
Kathie

HI EVERYONE

WELL WE MADE IT, EVEN WITH A BUMPY START --- WE GOT TO THE AIRPORT ONLY 35 MINUTES BEFORE THYE FLIGHT! WHAT MATTERS IS WE DID MAKE IT.

WE ARRIVED IN GUATEMALA CITY AND MET UP WITH MEMBERS OF OUR GROUP FROM NSU IN DAVIE, COLORADO AND WISCONSIN. A MIXTURE OF NURSES, DOCTORS, MEDICAL STUDENTS, PARAMEDICS A COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS. WE NEEDED TO HANG AROUND FOR SEVERAL HOURS

have an awesome day , Walking cobblestone streets, window shopping for Guatemalan Jade, venturing in and out of quaint lush courtyards, one more lovelier than the next and experiencing the best massage ever at the "Mayan Spa" for \$39.00 .

Many women and children villagers are still in Mayan dress, not to worry, lots of photos. We ventured into the market area, similar to our swap shops but we did find the Artisan Area where we spent most of our time. Lovely brightly colored hand made items as well as Guatemala Coffee.

The town (Antigua) itself has NO traffic lights with plenty of Stop Signs that seem to merely be a "suggestion" to those using their autos. But we all look after each other and we haven't seen one accident so I guess they know what they are doing. To truly experience Antigua one must venture behind the doorways, roaming into ancient hotels, the Cathedrals, Santo Domingo monastery, taking time to look up at the Volcano which seems to look over the city as its protectorate.

However there was a terrible earthquake here in the 1700 that devastated the town. Luckily some of the partially destroyed building are still standing as historical sites and a reminder of what power there is in the universe.

It is now Sunday morning, nothing was open except the Main Cathedral so we went to church. Our bags are packed and we have about a 4 hour trip to the Lake. Should be more to tell later.

Love ya all
Kathie

Hi all

We made it from Antigua to Panajachel on Lake Atitlan yesterday afternoon. The 4 hour excursion included a group luncheon and a visit to Iximche Ruins. This place is spectacular, surrounded by volcanos, inactive at this time. In the evening , we broke into two assigned teams and did our final prep for the next day.

Alicia & I were assigned to Team B, in the pharmacy. After our 7:30 AM lecture we were off to the village of San Juan de la Laguna on the other side of the Lake Atitlan by boat. I can't say enough about the great people on this mission. If the future of health care is in the hands of the dedicated med students and residents we are with, I can assure you that all is well.

San Juan was a poverty stricken village but every single villager we met had a smile on their face. We set up the clinic at a school which was next door to the Volunteer Ambulance Squad which was started by a group of fire fighters from the states. There are wonderful people everywhere we go.

Our team set up the school based clinic in no time at all using sheets to divide classrooms into exam rooms. The lab was set up in another classroom and manned by a microbiologist and med students.

Registration ran smoothly with the help of our community volunteers. We saw over 120 patients today, all of which thanked us over and over again for being here.

The kids loved the light up buttons from NBHD and the men were very grateful for the shirts from University. The smiles on their faces were priceless and the children, dressed in their traditional Mayan dress were the cutest! YES we have lots of photos.

After a very long day we had to take the boat back, shower and had a great dinner with great people in Pana (What the locals call Panajachel).
More tomorrow, different village, new adventure.

Love you Guys
Kathie

ADVENTURE BEFORE DEMENTIA!

Tuesday, Jan 22

Hi All

Oh my gosh - Last night!

I had left the group early to get to an internet cafe. They could not find me and thought I went back to the Playa Linda Hotel. Well I found myself all alone on the streets of Pana. I felt comfortable until I had about a quarter mile to go on a DARK, really DARK street. God only knows how I got the guts to hitch hike on the back of some young guys motor cycle I had flagged down, but I did. Sometimes you just gotta take a risk in life.

Now about yesterday ===== No boat ride but instead we went by bus, not an air conditioned tourist bus but a ^Sardine bus. Imagine if you would, about 22 people crammed into a van with the medical supplies on the roof. Believe it or not I slept most of the way. (I can sleep on a picket fence!) Anyway the road was rocky and bumpy with winding twisting switch backs. The scenery was of beautiful mountains, dried up corn fields, lush coffee fields and tin roofed dwellings. Poverty is everywhere. Oh and Dogs, Dogs, Dogs::::::::::::::::::::::::::
We arrived in "Xichoc" Chut Estancia, a poor Mayan village with beautiful children and brightly colored native attire. Each village has their own unique clothing style apparent in the head-dresses of the women and their unique clothing design. Wait till you see the pics! After only one day we had setting up the clinic down pat and it took us no time at all. The location was again in a school with 2 outside port a johns, one without a door. This is certainly a step Up from India where we just had a whole in the ground.! Anyway we started slow but by noon the line was around the school. Tylenol and ibuprofen for the women, they carry everything on their heads while carrying their babies on their back. Definitely not an easy life, no wonder their chief complaint was headaches and back pain. Lice and scabies was the order of the day and we all started scratching ourselves, Hopefully its just in our heads, mentally not physically of course. As you can guess I was in the pharmacy again, I loved it, who knows maybe after this I can get a job at Walgreens! NOT!

Coming back down the mountain in the same sardine bus was a hoot. A totally different experience because the brakes were squeaking and we prayed that the bus driver believed in preventive maintenance for the braking system. We all made it safely back and lost no supplies off the roof.

The work is hard but its work that you love in your heart and we had fun Life is good.....

We had dinner at a great Asian restaurant in town and the company was fantastic. The peddlers came in and hooked Dr Bentley, Mouse and Dr Kesdan into buying these

wall hangings. Then we couldn't get rid of them. Across the room was Linda and her husband Doug. I asked Doug to raise his hand then told the peddlers to go to the man with his hand up! It got our table off the hook for a while and we all had a good laugh.

Well I'll write about Jaibolito after dinner.

Love

Kathie

Ok I know I am behind in my journal but I was busy so you will get 2 e mails today.

After our 7:70 am lecture we were on board a boat again traveling across the serene waters of Lake Atitlan to the Village of jaibolito.

If I haven't mentioned it before you all must know that we are safely escorted to each village with armed police.

So relax.....

After Dis-embarking at Jaibolito we walked up a mountain to the local school.

This was by far the poorest village we have seen on this mission. Tin roofed shacks, children and some adults without shoes. Because we are blessed to live in America, we forget the rest of the world. We forget that other people are hungry, without clean water, without soap to wash their children's faces, without air conditioning, without a refrigerator to store the Amoxil that we give them for their infections. How can we as a people and a nation complain about minor issues of our daily lives that boil down to really nothing. If anyone thinks their life is hard, come here or go to any developing nation or volunteer in your own neighborhoods. It will give you a different perspective on your life.

Try as we could to keep a safe distance so as not to get lice or scabies or anything else for that matter, what can you really do when these grateful people want to shake your hand or give you a hug and a kiss. At least I can get the right medicines to clear it up. If it happens it happens!

The clinic in Jaibolito was not as busy, mostly women and children or children who arrived by themselves because their parents were in the fields working. Most needed dental care and all we could do was give them some meds for pain and refer them to the regional clinics. Most won't followup because of the cost. Dental hygiene here is non existent so we gave out toothpaste and tooth brushes. But we do the best we can.

Children without shoes were give the socks and the women who had rough dry hands from working in the fields were given all those Esteee Lauder and Clinque "gift with purchase samples" we brought with us.

We didn't have all the meds we needed so I learned about some substitutes for modern medicinal medicine. We all became very creative in mixing different items, but without a mortar and pestol I had to keep going to the lab and borrow a pot to crush them! But we got just by just fine. The next day Harold and Vickie, the lab gurus, gave me Guatemalan mortar and pestol; hand crafted out of wood I will cherish as a gift from 2 new wonderful friends. They are a terrific couple and have been on his mission several times.

At one point the children were getting rowdy and the crayons and coloring just wasn't making it any more so I brought out the DVD player and started playing Disney's Dumbo. About 15 of them sat around very quietly and watched the cartoon in English. It didn't seem to matter that it wasn't in their Mayan language because they were all laughing at this classic cartoon. The principal of the school walked by and could not believe how well they were behaving. I don't think

these kids had ever seen a cartoon. Tomorrow's feature cartoon will be "Lady and the Tramp".

I worked the Pharmacy today with Dr John Pelosie and he was great. After the feature film was over the kids started hanging out in the Farmacia. I started giving out whistles and then the ruckus began! Dr Pelosie said "we better get these kids out of here" so I stood up and said "Vamos, every one out" I could here the laughter coming from the guys in the lab next door. What a hoot.....

After clinic was over, we packed up our supplies and headed down the mountain. We noticed extraordinary landscaping and Dr. K showed us the way up to a hotel in the mountains run by a couple from Norway. Go Figure! It was an oasis of beauty in the middle of poverty, with a breathtaking view of the volcanos and lake. Have I told you how much I love each and everyone of the medical students. They are funny, fabulous, and extremely dedicated to their goal. Each and everyone of them are going to make terrific doctors and I will proudly work along side each and everyone of them.

Well that's all for now.
Kathie

Thursday January 24, 2008 Hi al, Oh my goodness - what a day!

No AM lecture this morning, instead we headed straight to the Village of San Jose Chacaya by van and we could not be late. You see, we were to meet with the "new" First Lady of Guatemala: Sandra Torres De Colon. Her husband has been in office only 2 weeks and she heard about our mission and wanted to meet us and see the DO Care operation in action. What a thrill, what an honor!

When we arrived in San Jose Chacaya security was tight everywhere with arm guards and police dogs. The villagers were dressed in their Sunday best. Our fearless leader Dr. Camille Bentley was a little nervous because she had to make a speech in Spanish. We were all so very proud of her.

First Lady Torres de Colon arrived by helicopter and landed in an open dusty field close to the Municipal Building where we had set up our clinic. After 4 days, we were pros at it by now and much to our delight the bathroom situation was better than any other village so far.

They ushered us out to sit in the first 2 rows and there must have been at least 200 villagers sitting with us. On the dais was of course the First Lady, Dr. Bentley, Sandra Pasayes our mission contact in Guatemala, the mayor of the town and the "Interim" Governor of the region. Interim because we heard the last Governor had been shot and killed last week! (Knowing this made some of us nervous when someone in the town set off fire crackers during the speeches) They called Dr. Bentley up to the podium and the Mayor presented her with a lovely shawl in regional design. (Remember I told you that each village and/or region has their own unique print designs and head dresses). The First Lady also received a regional dress. When First Lady Torres de Colon took the podium she gave a lovely speech (in Spanish, but it was interpreted for some of us that didn't understand). She thanked Dr. Bentley for her work and the DOCare International organization efforts over the years in Guatemala and promised to assist with future missions. Dr. Bentley presented the First Lady with one of our 2008 DO Care shirts and her speech was flawless. Dr. Olga Martinez had done a fine job in prepping her the day before. What a team! Then, to all of our surprise, we were individually called up to the podium to receive a certificate

of appreciation from the First Lady. She shook our hand and kissed each of us. What a lovely lady she is, what an honor for us. She then toured the clinic we had set up and met with the doctors treating patients. She seemed impressed with the lab and Dr. Harold Laubach who asked if she wanted to view the slide sample under the microscope which she did. I think it was of ringworm, but I'm not sure. Harold was always so excited with all the fecal specimens he collected at each site, a fine example of having to love your job. He was a hoot!

As I understand, this is the first time that DO Care has been honored in this way. And although this was certainly a political ceremony, it can only help to foster future DO Care endeavors in Guatemala. Several news cameras were there but we didn't see any from CNN so you probably won't see this in the States but the next day we found out that it was, in fact, newsworthy because we made 2 newspapers, one with a full page article.

Both newspapers (Pensa Libre www.pensalibre.com; Nuestro Diario) featured Dr. Bentley with the First Lady and The Dario paper had pictures of Dr Kesdan caring for one of the clinic patients, a beautiful picture of Laura Rubinate, one of the students, receiving her certificate and a picture of the audience with an tiny, very tiny, picture of me sitting in the audience, that I don't think my own mother would pick out, but what the heck I know it's me.

After the First Lady left it was back to work and the line had already started forming at registration. During the clinic time I was asked to take Polaroid pictures of the villagers and give them out. When Dr. Bentley asked you to do something, you just did it! I tried to focus the photo shoot on mothers and their babies because I knew we didn't have enough film for everyone. To see the delight in their faces when their picture magically appeared before them was priceless. But the best was when the old men and women tugged on me to take their pictures. Their gray hair, tan leathered skin and wrinkles showed a life of hard work and poverty, but their eyes shown brightly and there smiles were beaming. This was perhaps the only picture they have of themselves.

Linda Waidelich and I took a break and walked into the local church. The interior had a high wooden beamed ceiling and the most interesting thing to me was the statues. They weren't made of the typical stone, wood, plaster or marble but of a material resembling Paper Mache, painted brightly. One of the statues was of Jesus Christ with a sombrero! What's up with that? Anyway, it was very interesting.

The ride back was bumpy as usual and we passed poor tin roofed housing, villagers harvesting onions (we knew this because you could smell the onions across the road. Back at home base in Panajachel, tired, dirty but looking forward to our farewell dinner together which Dr. Bentley had arranged.

Kathie

January 25th

Yesterday Dr. Bentley gave us the morning off. Some of the volunteers went hiking up a volcano and 11 of us, me included, went ZIP LINING! Oh my. what an experience. I had so much fun I can't wait to do it in Costa Rica if I ever get there.

We headed back @ 2:30 from Pana to Antigua in style. NOT! What appeared in front of the hotel was a large tourist bus that, as they say, had seen better days! Our luggage and supplies could not fit all in the luggage compartment, some had to be transported in the bed of the police escort truck and some on seats. We all crammed in and had an interesting trip home. Some of the roads twisted and turned so the bus had to navigate through this mountainous region with much care. It was like driving along the Amalfi Coast! That night and the next day were open to us. Some had plans to go to Tikal, others to the Macadamia Nut Farm, shopping was on the hit list of course and others took advantage of the inexpensive day spa's in town. I opted for Jade shopping and a trip to the Macadamia Nut farm with about six others. We met the owner, an American named Lorenzo who was a self proclaimed hippie from California. Lorenzo entertained us with jokes, his colorful background and his political insight of the new president. He didn't seem to like the First Lady so no one dared mention we had met her on Thursday. It would not have been politically correct.

We got back to our Hotel in Antigua around noon and we all scattered to do our own thing for the remainder of the last day in Guatemala. What a delightful time. Dinner was early for me because I, along with 11 others, were in the first transport van back to Guatemala City at 4:30 AM to catch our flights home. I can't remember all 40 volunteers names but I want to mention those that my old brain can recall: Dr. Camille Bentley of course, Drs. Pelosie, Kesden, Holler, Seybold and Cappazuti, All provided great lectures and care, Drs Olga Martinez, Mauricio Sabagal, and Almari Ginory were outstanding young clinicians and terrific to be with during clinic and hanging out, Micah, Alicia, Doug and Linda, Hilarious Harold and Vicky, Amari, Moosey, Susan, Amy, Meena, Marlow (the best salsa dancer ever!), Sneha, Laura (she looks like Izzy in Grays Anatomy) and Tabatha, Carmella & Sal. If I have forgotten anyone its because the brain has reached its peak.

If any of my friends reading this meets up with any of the above, please greet them as your friend also. I will certainly cherish the time I had with each and every one.

Well this adventure is over, my next is London in a few weeks.

I hope you enjoyed sharing this experience with me. Let me know if you want to be included in the London Journal

Love You all Kathie

REMEMBER "Adventure before Dementia"

Primera Dama clausura jornada médica en San José Chacayá, Sololá

Unos mil residentes de los municipios de Santa Catarina Palopó, San Juan La Laguna, Xoquic, Santa Cruz La Laguna, Panajachel y San José Chacayá en Sololá, fueron favorecidos con jornadas médicas gratuitas que realizó un grupo de médicos de la organización DOCARE Internacional, del 21 al 24 de enero. La atención médica se llevó a cabo en coordinación con la Secretaría de Obras Sociales de la Esposa del Presidente

–SOSEP–.



Los municipios visitados alcanzan niveles de pobreza de: San Juan La Laguna, 89 por ciento; Santa Cruz La Laguna 81; Santa Catarina Palopó, 78; Panajachel, 34; y San José Chacayá, 75 por ciento.

La misión médica está integrada por internistas de diferentes especialidades, enfermeras, paramédicos, estudiantes de medicina y voluntarios, los cuales brindaron atención médica a niñas, niños y adultos que requieren de asistencia principalmente en problemas respiratorios y gastrointestinales; para ello la delegación extranjera trajo consigo equipo para efectuar exámenes, y medicamentos para distribuirlos a las personas atendidas.

Las jornadas se llevaron a cabo en escuelas, salones municipales, estaciones de bomberos y casas particulares habilitadas en dichos municipios con el respaldo logístico y técnico de los alcaldes municipales y otras instituciones.

La Primera Dama de la Nación, licenciada Sandra Torres de Colom, clausuró la jornada médica que se llevó a cabo en Sololá durante esta semana y agradeció el noble gesto de DOCARE Internacional, por brindar atención médica a los más necesitados de las áreas rurales de Sololá.

Así mismo, la Esposa del Presidente, solicitó al alcalde de San José Chacayá, Luis Florencio García la apertura de la oficina de la mujer para gestionar la atención a este sector de la sociedad.

