



Report from mission # 31 to Honduras

April 18 to the 29 (Plus the extra 5 days)



We returned home a week ago. This was a very successful mission and we accomplished the goals we had set for it. This report will be a little different from the one I normally send out after the Mission. This report is comprised of a letter that was written Ron Smith one of our participants. I think this will give you a better picture and an appreciation of what a mission is all about. Also Sharon and I stayed an extra few days for meetings and also to take the opportunity to deliver 230 pairs of shoes to two small villages. Sharon will share this story a little later in this report.

Here are the technical part and stats, we attended to over 1200 patients, helped with the construction of 2 homes, and another two homes that we funded were also completed. We traveled to Jesus

De Otoro where we provided a supply of vitamins to the orphanage (each kid will receive a multivitamin each day for the next 12 months and we also provided 4 months of bulk food supplies).



A volunteer's experience, by Ron:

I wake up at 5:30 AM in the bottom bunk of a room with three bunk beds, a humming gringo air conditioner and a rooster crowing. I remember we arrived last night, a three-hour drive after landing in Tegucigalpa - my checked bag did not. I was warned but not quite prepared. My roommates - still asleep - include three other male volunteers, our youngest being fourteen years old and myself, the sole member, of the very exclusive volunteer-over-the-age-of-sixty-five club. I don't know it yet, but we along with the others in our group, local volunteers etc. are about to become a family. Marina, our very special housemother will be an important part of that process. She is up at 5:30 AM everyday prepares our breakfast, dinner at whatever hour we return, cleans the casa, does our laundry and always has a great disposition. Without luggage - my new family soon finds me a toothbrush, toothpaste and a clean T-shirt. This is the first day of our 12-day mission in Honduras. We're all here with a common goal of trying to make a positive difference in the lives of others - perhaps for different reasons and in dissimilar ways. The people we've come to help are the poorest, weakest and least important of Honduran society. We will all try to do our best with what we know.



Early most mornings we load our hockey bags full of medical supplies etc. into a pickup truck, squeeze into our small van and swerve along sudden-obstacle roads for a few hours. I quickly learn not to ask how long the trip will take because the answer in Honduras is always the same - "about an hour". The rural dirt road villages we travel to have been abandoned by the government. Mud-stick-plastic-sheeted houses, no running water and primitive latrines are the norm. I've never seen poverty this appalling. These living conditions and lack of health education result in common medical conditions including malnutrition, foot fungus, parasite infestation and

diabetes. Despite their environment the people seem happy, barefooted children play among the chickens, pigs, dogs, cattle and clean laundry hangs on clotheslines. Steve Malone /Healthy Horizons for Children & Families has conducting

medical brigades to these communities for the past 10 years – approximately every 6-months. On this mission, thanks to the generosity of his supporters, we have brought twenty seven - 70 pound hockey bags full of medical supplies, vitamins etc. with an estimated value of over \$50,000. These supplies and the commitment of volunteers here and at home are critical to the continued work of HHCF. Five full days of our mission were spent operating clinics, teaching children how to brush their teeth and wash their hands and distributing toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, vitamins and medications to the 1200 people treated. At each location people were lined up waiting for our arrival – many having walked long distances to be there. On several occasions we operated out of a small clinics where the dispensary shelves were always bare and running water a rare luxury. Without a medical background this was my first experience at witnessing the dedication, organization and long hot hours of exhausting work put in by HHCF's medically trained volunteers. I somehow felt inadequate with the limited things I was able to do. HHCF and the Agrolibano Foundation, their partners in Honduras, are working hard to change the unfortunate cycle of children growing up destined to



repeat their parent's lives – both in health and living conditions. On this mission we participated in building 4-houses – paid for by HHCF donors. These are simple one room structures built on concrete pillars in an area that's flooded annually. Currently most people in this area live in mud and stick houses. My main reason for going to Honduras was to explore possibilities in micro financing. Agrolibano took the time to show us the schools they helped support, explained the programs that help students

to become self-sufficient in their communities and took us to visit several of their "micro loan" funded entrepreneurs. It was a great insight into how providing a small loan to aspiring young people works in third world conditions. This is something you never learn unless you make the effort to travel and see things for yourself. Towards the end of our time in Honduras we, once again, squeezed into our van and travelled 5-hours to an orphanage in Jesus-de-Ortoro – a valley village in the mountains. HHCF has been providing the food and vitamins for this facility for the past 10-years and when we arrive with the next 6-months supply - the shelves are virtually bare. On our arrival, the 28 children who depend on this facility along with their caregivers welcomed us with a song and prayer – this is the type of thing that tugs at your heart. How can they be so grateful for the simple necessities we take for granted?



"In our society, especially in rural areas, the highest social status is a gringo.

Canadians/Americans are considered wealthy and knowledgeable – which makes them important. Sending volunteers to these neighbourhoods has an effect on the adults, the other people in the community and the children. These children deserve to see something different than what they know. They need to understand that another way of living is possible. When all they've ever seen is their own neighbourhood, no one can blame them for not aspiring to something better. But when they feel important, welcomed and acknowledged by others – especially those they consider important – it enhances their self-esteem. And, it's a reminder to other community members – who know the gringos are helping – that these children exist and they need someone to give them better opportunities"

Quote from "The Volountourist" by Ken Budd



Ron, Steve and Frank

Selena and Sharon



A special project for Sharon. Last November one of the homes our volunteer brigade built was for a family in a small community called Agua Agria. Their 12 year old daughter, Selena along with other children were playing with Sharon and enjoying her efforts to speak Spanish to them! Selena asked Sharon through gestures if she could have her shoes, she had bare feet. Unable to leave her shoes for Selena, Sharon felt bad and was touched by the personal request for such a simple thing. She was resolved to make sure Selena would get a pair of shoes the next time she went to Honduras.

Upon further consideration, Sharon decided she could make a bigger impact by doing a special collection of new shoes and money for this cause and also tie it into her 40th birthday celebration by requesting support for this personal mission as a gift. Well, the support was amazing, with dozens of new shoes and \$1,300 being donated!

Steve and Sharon were able to buy 110 pairs of shoes in Honduras and added that to collection they brought from Canada. With 230 pairs of shoes sorted by sizes they headed to Auga Agria where children were waiting outside the one room school. After all the children had shoes we went to Selena's new house to see her family. Then we took the remaining 60 pairs of shoes to another small community to distribute there. It was truly touching to see the smiles of the kids who were so happy to have a brand new pair of shoes. We also gave them toothbrushes (and candy)!



Finally, none of this could have been done without the help of our donors. We are lucky to have the support of so many people and companies. Thanks to Natural Factors, Nature's Fare Markets, Nature's Bounty, Seroyal, McLoed Dental, Henryschein Dental, HESPRO, Stamford United Church of Niagara Falls, Rotary clubs from across the Niagara Region and in particular Fonthill Rotary on this mission. Health Partner International, American Airlines, Agrolibano Foundation, Niagara Emergency Medical Service, and of course all of our individual donors large and small, every dollar helped us help others and without it we could not do much at all. You are all taking part in making life a little better for many people in Honduras, thank you!



I would also like to add that our partnership with Agrolibano makes a huge difference in how we can help in Honduras, without their support and guidance on the ground we would not accomplish so much in so little time. Thank you to Pamela Molina, Dr. Nelly, Mr. Elias, Eduardo and of course all of the local volunteers in Honduras.

Please note that we are already gearing up for the November brigade. The mission will take place from November 21 to December 2, 2013 and the spring one will be April 3 to April 14, 2014. We already have 50% of the participants for November, so please sign up early to be part of it.

Working with the people of Honduras to save lives, restore dignity and bring hope.

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