

TRIP REPORT
March 3-10, 2018
Harding PA Students
Chichicastenango

Gary Hill, Harding PA faculty, has been bringing groups of students for over a decade. He always brings groups that are prepared and ready to serve. This year, two of his former students and HTI volunteers, Katie and Jimmy Skaggs joined us as sponsors and pharmacists. It is so encouraging to have students return to serve once they've graduated.

We were also joined by three other professionals; Coral Pitkin served not only as a nurse, but translator. Drew Bennie is a retired social worker from south Texas. He has worked with HTI as a translator on several trips, but this was his first time in the highlands. Sharon Van Cleave is a Speech Pathologist from Abilene and also fluent in Spanish. She and husband, Vince, have worked with us on many trips. Sharon is working on developing a follow-up program of Speech Therapy for some of our cleft lip/palate patients and others who would benefit from this therapy. She saw several patients while here this time and worked with Noe Chan, HTI's physical therapy provider to do some follow up work with some of his patients.

The PA students working with us were: Amber Acord, Megan Albers, Brock Henderson, Sydney Foster, Hannah Minton, Alexa Naceaneno, Elizabeth Speck and Blake Buehrer. Nursing students: Bailey Shelton and Makayla Smith. Undergrad Dakota Endsley and translator and former MET student Titus Dauck. Also joining us this year was Jana Berryhill, Susan Mellor's sister. Jana has joined us in the Clinic Ezell, but never in the highlands. She and husband, Dr. Richard Berryhill have been generous supporters of the work in Guatemala. As Harding graduates, the work the Harding students do was of special interest to them.

Because of the flight schedules, the team arrived late Saturday night and stayed at the Barcelo Hotel in Guatemala City. Sunday morning Kemmel had arranged for our transport to Chichi. Kemmel and Lisa do a great job having full schedules planned to keep everyone busy and allow as many ABC children to get their semi-annual health and dental checkups as possible.

Since Sunday was a travel day, we had a wonderful breakfast at beautiful Hotel Barcelo. Then after loading our luggage into the trucks from Chichi, we headed out for the 3 hour drive up into the mountains. About half way to Chichi we always stop at a service station which allows a little break and also a chance to get a drink and try some unfamiliar treats. Upon arrival at Hotel Santo Tomas, we were assigned our rooms, then got to sample the famous lunch buffet. Chichi hosts the largest open-air market in Central America on Sundays and Thursdays and people flock to the city from all over the world. The buffet offers foods typical of the culture. We then had a couple of free hours to explore the market and pick up a few souvenirs. Chichi is famous for textiles and the market is a riot of color with the many garments and blankets offered from the local handiwork.





It was a beautiful day, so we gathered for our meeting and worship time in the breezeway by the pool in the late afternoon. We were filled in by Kemmel and Lisa on what our work would be, how records were to be kept and other technical information and also clued in to some differences in the culture here and some do's and don'ts. After that, we sang and had a devo by Brother Dave and shared in communion together. Finally, after a light supper, it was time to head to our rooms for a good night's rest in preparation for 7:00 a.m. breakfast and work.

Our days followed a similar pattern. After breakfast of eggs, beans and tortillas at Hotel Santo Tomas, we gathered in the car park area to get daily assignments. Our goal was to be pulling out of the parking lot by 8 a.m. We make it a practice to get an early start so as to not be on the mountain roads after dark. Kemmel divides us up into three teams, tells us which truck will go to each work place and we pray, then load up for a day unlike those we have in the states.

When we arrived at our destination (usually a church or civic building on the top of a mountain an hour or more drive from Chichi), we all helped unload the trucks. Usually we had 2-3 trucks and a van at each location. The dentist offices were set up, dental hygiene and cleaning stations were set up, consulting area for seeing patients were devised, the pharmacy was laid out on tables and the vitals area was arranged. The Guatemalan team members do this every day, so they had our system set up in no time. Charts were laid out in alphabetical order and names of patients were written down in the order in which they arrived. After the entire group gathered to pray, patients' names were called and they were assigned to a student. The students took and charted vitals, noting whether the child's growth was in the acceptable greater than 85 percentile. Dr. Lisa, Gary, Sheri Kretschmar (missionary nurse), Coral and Amber did the medical consults and the Guatemalan team did the dentistry work with the assistance of some of the Harding students. The students stayed with their patient throughout the entire visit and were given real world experience in mission medicine.

About 2 p.m. it's time for a lunch break. The church ladies prepare a hearty lunch for us, usually consisting of a piece of chicken or beef in a rich pepian sauce served with rice, potatoes, other vegetables and always with several tomatitos and tortillas. Sometimes we are given a juice drink or warm rice or maize beverage. One congregation surprised us with chow mein! It was a favorite of the students! It is difficult to eat things to which we are unaccustomed, but the team did a great job cleaning their plates.

The afternoon is a repeat of the morning with more students coming for their checkups. Students here go to morning or afternoon school depending on their age so the school building can be used more effectively. So we have two groups of students to see depending on their age. There are also local people with illnesses to be seen by Dr. Lisa or the dentists. David and I were in charge of photographing each child for their chart which Kemmel keeps up to date. We were given the happy task of overseeing Dr. Lisa's traveling library this year as well. She has been given a suitcase full of children's story books in Spanish.

It is possible that many of the children have never held a story book in their hands outside of school. They were entranced by the books and many sat right down to read! Even the parents wanted to look at a book and our hearts were warmed by the sight of mother and child sitting together reading. Dr. Lisa is working on making this a lending library where the children can take a book home to read and return it at the next church or clinic time.



At the end of the day, when there are no more patients to be seen, we load up the trucks and head back to the hotel. Kemmel mentioned that there are 30% more cars on the roads than there were just 5 years ago, which puts a strain on the narrow roads of Chichi. We need to remember to pray for safe travels for our team members who travel these roads daily to serve!

We usually have 20 or 30 minutes before dinner which is just enough to check email (if the wifi is working) or just have a moment of quiet. This time there was another group at the hotel so they put us in the bar for all our meals. It was cozy and ironic. After dinner we gathered for notes of the day and evening devotional. The Harding students help lead the devo each night. We generally spend a few minutes telling about various programs of HTI's ministry. The students are impressed to know that this work goes on with or without volunteers from the U.S. One student said, "it helps to know when we leave that there are Guatemalans who will follow up with the spiritual needs of those we've prayed with."

One final thought. One of our translators shared her experience of sitting in a consult with Sheri. Sheri asked if she could pray with the lady before she left and the patient readily agreed. As you may know, many times the Guatemalans pray softly along with the person leading the prayer. The student translator was able to understand as the patient prayed for our team. She prayed for our safety and was grateful that we would leave our families and homes and travel such a long distance to help them. What a humbling experience to have those we hope to serve in the name of Jesus pray alongside us in the name of Jesus.

God is good!