

Health Talents International 2018 Oklahoma Christian Summer Break Team

The April, 2018 Oklahoma Christian University Mission trip to the Highlands of Guatemala included the following students: Jan Bian, McKenna Box, Gian McLaughlin, Reid Reding, Brandon Reed, Caleb Ruff and Sidney Wilkins. Faculty sponsors were Eric Phelps, PhD and Sara Alcorn, Phd. The rest of the team included Dr. Jeanie Tryggestad, Pediatrician and her husband Erik, Editor of the Christian Chronicle, Dr. Zann McMahan, Dr. Darren Rauch, Pharmacist, and his wife Trevy who is a nurse and daughter of Shirlie and the late Dave Ellis, long time HTI supporters. Doctors Debbie and Owen Corwin, dentists rounded out the group. Team leaders were David and Susan Mellor.

Dr. Phelps has been leading this group for five years. He is an example of how to prepare students for a medical mission. The students meet several times prior to the trip and learn to take and record vital signs. This allows them to begin assisting the HTI staff on day one. The students come prepared with their own scrubs and a medical bag containing stethoscope, blood pressure cuffs, thermometers and other supplies that might be needed. They have gained experience in Oklahoma by volunteering at the Lighthouse, a free clinic in Oklahoma City that serves a predominately Hispanic population. The students have also learned key phrases in Spanish and the local dialect of Quiche. This year there were only two students who had been on previous trips. Dr. Phelps has limited the students to two trips so that more students can learn from this experience while at OC.



Dr. Jeanie Tryggstad has come on this trip for many years. She is a pediatrician with a specialty in endocrinology. Dr. Lisa Dunham, HTI's missionary physician, had been waiting to consult with Dr. Jeanie concerning a four-year old child who had the physical attributes of a large one year old. He could not walk, had few verbal skills and was severely limited in most ways. It was determined that this child had been born without a thyroid gland and this was the cause of his severe developmental delay. Dr. Jeanie mentioned that this was an issue that is never seen in the U.S. due to a test given at birth which would be treated immediately, and the child would develop normally with medication to do the job of the thyroid. Unfortunately for this little boy the treatment can stabilize his development now; but cannot recover the damage that has already been done. This is a severe blow to this family and we would appreciate prayers for them and their son. Noe Chan, HTI's physical therapy specialist has begun to work with the little boy to try to maximize his development.



Dr. Zann McMahan has also been on many missions with us. He is a family practitioner with a special emphasis on dermatology which is a big issue in the highlands. The high altitude and dry air make certain skin disorders more challenging and it is always good to have him on hand to see the patients who need special help in this area. He has a great rapport with the children.

With Dr. Zann, Dr. Jeanie and Dr. Lisa we were able to see many of the ABC students (HTI's child sponsorship program). These students are given twice annual well child checkups, dental cleaning and treatment if necessary. The Corwins were invaluable HTI veterans and because of their expertise and exciting new techniques we were able to save damaged teeth. Dr. Owen Corwin was on hand to perform dental surgery on some suffering people. Two of the students were interested in pursuing their career in dentistry and they were able to get some hands-on experience and learn from two really good dentists. The HTI dental hygienists were also happy to learn some new techniques and appreciate the mentorship of the Corwins.

Erik Tryggestad is Editor in Chief of the Christian Chronicle. He joined us last year and wrote a great article describing some of the work we do in Guatemala. It is interesting to see the work through the eyes of a journalist who has traveled the world. We appreciate his interest in our work and he stayed busy helping where he could, interviewing church leaders and taking innumerable photos. He was excited about what he saw in the local churches as far as growth, stability in eldership and good problem-solving techniques. He quipped that he thought the U.S. churches might need some of the Guatemalan church leaders to come to the states to do mission work!

One of Brother Dave Mellor's jobs is to take a photo of each ABC child to keep a visual development record. This year Kemmel (Highlands HTI director) added an additional video to the photograph requirement. This short video helps the students feel more comfortable communicating. Kemmel is looking into ways to make these videos available to the sponsors. We are always amazed that Kemmel knows the names of each of the several hundred children in this program and is constantly thinking of ways to improve the lives of these kids.



This year there has been a greater presence of local church members at the mobile clinics. Each clinic has started with a local leader speaking to the waiting patients and leading us in prayer. It was not uncommon to have the curtains in place for privacy when we arrived and many helping hands loading and unloading the trucks. Each day a noon meal was provided by the local church women who cooked filling foods over open fires. Meals always include tamalitos which are typical to this region. They are made with masa dough steamed in banana leaves and eaten with whatever soup or rice dish is served. They are extremely filling, but it's not uncommon for the local men to outpace the Americans in tamalito eating 10 to 1.

Trevy Rauch is an experienced nurse who teaches in the nursing program at OC. Her father was the late Dave Ellis, a former board member and one of HTI's greatest supporters. Dave was a pharmacist who designed the pharmacy at Clinica Ezell and was instrumental in developing the entire program. Trevy is married to Darren who is also a pharmacist and we kept him busy filling prescriptions at the mobile medical clinics every day.

The clinics were well attended. We were concerned since the first 3 days school was out for the children and government workers were given days off due to the death of the Mayor of Guatemala City (former president of Guatemala). However, we saw little effect on the numbers of people seen in the clinics.

The first Sunday we were there we worshipped with the young people at Xepocol. They have a special meeting for the younger people (20-30) with Noe Chan preaching and an A cappella group leading the singing. It is a powerful example of what the younger members can do when given the opportunity. These young men and women are making a significant contribution to the work of the church in the Chichi area. Many of the leaders are also associated with HTI.

We are always encouraged by the work that goes on daily whether we are there or not. The staff is dedicated and truly have hearts of servants. We pray that the students who volunteer from the U.S. have had a life changing experience.

