

**Health Talents International
Mobile Medical/Dental Trip Report
September 23-28, 2015**

Trip Participants: Physicians: Gary Lawrence, Andrew McCormick, Dave Stanley; Dentists: Jim Haller, Robert Lamb, Nathan Owens; Dental Hygienist: Haley Powell; Dental Assistant: Julie Stanley; RN's: Alice Bush, Katie Ritter; Epidemiologist: Dave Morton; Translators: Sandy Sims, Abby Stanley, Sharon Van Cleave; Caregivers: Robert Morton, Don Proctor, Doug Proctor; Chaplain: Clay Hart; Team Leader: Dave Mellor

“NEXT MAN (WOMAN) UP”

The phrase “next man up” is often used in sports to emphasize the need for someone to step up when a key player is unable to perform. Sheri Kretzschmar proved to be a very capable replacement for Kemmel when he needed to be with his family after the passing of his stepfather. This trip proved that Kemmel’s desire to train his staff so that things would continue even in his absence is working. Sheri, along with the Guatemalan staff, provided very effective leadership and organization.

Before we left for Guatemala, 6 members of our team had to cancel. Dr. Mike Kelly’s wife Julie had to have a heart procedure, Kemmel and Lisa had to change their plans to be with Kemmel’s family and Dustin Semore suffered a seizure while attending a football game. Thus, he and his wife, Olivia, cancelled so he could undergo testing. (Olivia is Sandy Sims’ daughter.) Ironically, Sandy herself was unable to come with her family earlier in the year due to gall bladder surgery.

All this happened within a few days of our departure. Adjustments had to be made, flights had to be cancelled, rooms and meals had to be adjusted. A special thanks to Rick Harper, our director, and Alex our Guatemalan hero for taking care of all these details.

Even though we lost two of our physicians: Dr. Kelly and Dr. Lisa Dunham, we were blessed to have three doctors who have travelled with HTI before: Dr. Gary Lawrence, Dr. Andrew McCormick and Dr. Dave Stanley. Sheri organized the clinics each day so that they were adequately staffed. We were able to see all the ABC students for their well child and dental check-up. We also were able to see other patients each day.

Dr. McCormick has been coming on this trip for many years and is a Spanish speaker. He and his wife, Dr. Mary McCormick are a great blessing to HTI and until they had their first child, always came together. Dr. Dave Stanley and his wife, Julie, are also longtime supporters of HTI and their daughter, Abby, has been a MET student and was very helpful as a translator. They have another daughter, Kara, who didn’t come this trip since she is a newlywed, but she has served many years in the pharmacy. Dr. Gary Lawrence is the newest addition, but he has already found a place in the hearts of his patients.

Jim Haller, DDS, is one of the “pioneers” with HTI and a former board member. He loves the work we are doing and has been faithful to come many years. Although her full time profession is teaching, Julie Stanley has been trained by Dr. Haller to be his dental assistant on these trips. Julie's warmth and sweet smile help calm the patients. She and Dr. Haller make a wonderful team.

Nathan Owens, DMD, was the second of our three dentists. Nathan is the son of board member Larry Owens. Dr. Owens was able to bring a very helpful insight into evaluating our work in the dental health and prevention area. He was with us about 9 years ago and was very impressed with the improvement be observed. (See his article attached at the end of this report)

Dr. Owens brought with him Haley Powell, RDH. This was Haley’s first mission trip, first time out of the country and even her first flight! She was a great help and very professional. It was encouraging to see her gain more confidence each day. Haley wants to return next year and expressed her gratitude for being welcomed by our team.

One important part of HTI’s success is that we have an active hands on board of directors. On this trip we had two board members: Dr. Robert Lamb, DDS, and Alice Bush, RN. Dr. Lamb brought some specialized equipment and was able to do some more difficult procedures. He set up shop at Clinica Caris and was able to see several patients with special needs each day. He was also a valuable leader, always helpful and encouraging. We did keep him away from fireworks!

Alice Bush is another of the “pioneer” team, board member and former missionary with Health Talents. Alice and Katie Ritter, RN, traveled to Guatemala a few days early to meet with our Clinica Ezell nursing staff. Alice and Katie are both nurses and Spanish speakers and they were able to encourage open discussions with our nursing staff at Clinica Ezell. Alice is always looking for ways that we can improve our professional effort and our spiritual goals. Katie is an example of how younger Christians can get more deeply involved in this work. She has an abiding love for the Guatemalans and sees how HTI is trying to meet those spiritual and health needs.

Sandy Sims, Abby Stanley and Sharon Van Cleave were our translators. Because of her involvement with HTI, Sandy enrolled and completed a course in medical translation. She works with several hospitals and medical offices in the states, but her greatest joy is working with us on these trips. She and her husband, Scott, have brought all of their children with them over the years and serve the Lord and HTI with great love and faithfulness.

Abby Stanley has worked hard to improve her Spanish skills. She truly loves Guatemala and will return many times. She plans to enter PA school and will use those new skills to serve others and especially HTI.

Sharon and Vince Van Cleave inspire with their dedication to the Lord. When they were blessed with an increase in their income they were so excited because this would allow them to make two trips a year. Sharon is a speech pathologist and is looking for ways to use her training in Guatemala. She is an excellent translator. She was a valuable asset to our doctors in that capacity. Sharon and Vince are leaving Tennessee and moving back to Texas where they will be working with Dr. Stanley.

For those of us who have done this for many years, we know the joy of sharing a mission experience with those we love. Don Proctor has been to Guatemala before, but his brother, Doug, had not. Don wanted his brother to see God's work being done here so he was able to bring him along this year. These two men were a blessing to our team. They worked in dental sterilization. We enjoyed their stories and I would like to thank them for the reminder that we are here to heal and teach.

David Morton and his son, Robert, have made this an annual father/son trip for the past few years. David is an elder at the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Edmond, Oklahoma. He serves on the mission oversight team. His wisdom and past experience as a hospital administrator prove to be very helpful. I was impressed by a comment Robert made: "I don't have a lot of time to serve others, so I like to come here each year to serve."

Clay Hart was our trip chaplain. He serves as the International Minister for Memorial Road. He is an experienced missionary and servant. Each day Clay and I were given the privilege to pray with patients. What an awesome responsibility to pray over these precious souls. One day the two of us prayed with over 250 Guatemalans! Clay has also led our evening devotionals. Clay and Dave Stanley provided wonderful leadership for our song worship. Each night, Clay would ask a questions that caused us to reflect on the days' activities and how they provided spiritually for the needs of others and ourselves.

So, that's the team Sheri and I had to work with. We would gather for breakfast at 7:00 am, try to depart around 8:00. She would see that each team was staffed with the needed Guatemalans and Americans: doctors, nurses, pharmacists, dentists and drivers. Due to the loss of the Dunhams I was assigned the role of driver.

Even though it rained every day, we were able to travel to each of the villages that had been scheduled. I would like to draw attention to how well our Guatemalan staff stepped up and filled in when we lost the Dunhams and Kellys. We are blessed with a well-trained, committed staff of Godly men and women. Please continue to pray for them and their families. Kudos to Kemmel for the wonderful job he is doing.

Brother Dave

Dr. Nathan Owen's comments are on the next page.

I recently had the opportunity and blessing to be a part of the mobile medical/dental team in Guatemala. This was my fourth trip to Guatemala with HTI, as best I can remember. You see my most recent trip was about 8 or 9 years ago. I was still in dental school at the time of that trip. That was my second trip to Chichicastenago. I graduated from dental school and life happened. I started my career and my practice. I had two baby girls in the meantime as well. Next thing I knew it had been almost 9 years since I come back with HTI. This trip has absolutely blown me away. I am astounded with so many things that have changed in Guatemala. The airport is completely different and updated. Many of the paved roads seem better and the food even tastes better. I must admit that one of the biggest surprises was Wi-Fi in the hotel. I remember hearing one member of the group asking another what the Wi-Fi passcode was. I laughed to myself thinking, "They actually believe there is Wi-Fi here". But guess what? There was Wi-Fi!

So many things are still the same, however. The same curvy, scary dirt roads. The same crazy driving, that somehow just seems to work. The same jam packed market at the end of the week. But most importantly, the same beautiful people. The same kids with their big eyes and amazing laughter. The same loving, dedicated adults that work endlessly for their community. The same things that make Guatemala, Guatemala. What amazed me the most, though, was the change in the patients. I could not believe the change in these people's health. There was drastically less tooth decay. Their hygiene was remarkably improved. There seemed to be fewer major medical complications and more hygienic habits.

I pulled a fourth of the amount of teeth than I was expecting to due to this amazing improvement. At first I found myself being somewhat frustrated, as I wanted to treat as many patients as possible. After reflecting on these thoughts, however, I am a bit ashamed of myself. I now realize what the truth of this revelation really is. What HTI has set out to do is really working. They are creating healthy people in healthy communities that are maintaining this on their own. They have empowered these people to take care of their oral and physical health. They have educated these people to understand hygiene and prevention.

After almost a nine-year hiatus, I can now step back and see HTI's plan in motion and working. I compare this to seeing a child grow. The parents don't notice change because they see the child so often. But someone who hasn't seen the child in many years can notice amazing growth and change. That is how I feel. I can see amazing growth and development of these patients and of these communities. Not only is HTI growing the kingdom of God, but also it is growing the kingdom of God while improving the Guatemalan's quality of life. For that I have become even more committed to HTI's cause. What they are doing is really working! Keep up the good work. More importantly, keep up God's work.

Nathan Owens, DMD