



Miracles Happen!

MISSION REPORTS ...

October 2006: Hermosillo, Mexico

A dynamic partnership between CSI, St. Andrews Children's Clinic, and CIMA Hospital resulted in another successful four-day mission to Hermosillo, Mexico, in October 2006. Dr. Timothy Lander led a team of 23 health professionals and volunteers, who evaluated and surgically repaired 35 indigent patients from the U.S.-Mexico border area. These patients attend St. Andrews Clinic in Nogales, AZ, for free primary medical care, but have no access to surgery. With CIMA Hospital of Hermosillo graciously offering operating room and clinic space, CSI is happy to step in and provide surgical care, helping these children lead a normal life.

Nurses Jan Gauger and Mary Cary both commented on how warmly the hospital staff welcomed them and other CSI team members Patrick Byrne, Shelagh Cofer, Laura Evans, Bruce and Karen Ferrara, Mike Fritz, Michael Gotzsche, Bonnie Jarosch, Paul Joern, Tim Lander, Janette Lever, Jeanne Mach, Dick Marnach, Vicki Olson, Ricardo Ortizcazarín, Molly Perry, Daphne Quay, Tricia Rude, Katie Stevenson, David Tetzlaff and Norie Wilson. "They just wanted to help in any way they could, and be part of the team," said Jan. "It was overwhelming." Mary loved watching the patient families helping each other out—babysitting, checking on each other, etc. "There is a degree of intimacy there that doesn't occur in the U.S.," she said. "And they were all so, so grateful to us for our attention and concern. I don't think they're very used to positive attention!"

This three-way collaboration grows stronger every year, and we hope to be returning to Hermosillo in 2007, to serve Mexico's poorest population.

January 2007: Kumasi, Ghana

"They were so excited to see us again—so glad we were there!" exclaimed OR nurse Mary Johnson, referring to the professional staff at Komfo Anoyke Hospital in Kumasi, Ghana. On the third trip to Komfo Anoyke, the CSI team of Felicia Addae, Cheryl Anderson Cermin, Kofi Boahene, Mary Bye, Dan Danahey, Gloria Drake, Cathy Goedde, Mary Heller, Karen Hick, Katie Houle, Mary and Joel Johnson, Lora Koppel, Dick Marnach, Peter Melchert, Eric Moore, Lynn Randall, Beth Robinson, Sue Schacht, LouAnn, Smith, Susan Streitz, Leah Wandersee, Barb Wiemann and Robert Wood revisited old friends, and formed new bonds. One hospital orderly, Isaac, who knew Mary from two previous missions, came to work with the team every day, even though he had lost his own newborn baby only days earlier. "I felt so badly for him," said Mary, "but he said he wanted to be here with us, to help, be part of the team."



Barb Wiemann, Dan Danahey, Leah Wandersee, and Mary Johnson

Initial screening numbers were low—so low that Dr. Kofi Boahene, CSI team leader, galvanized one of the local residents, Dr. Alex Acheampomg, and team pediatrician Dr. Peter Melchert, and the three of them hit the streets to get the word out. They did radio interviews, handed out flyers at the bus station, and even visited the local market. As a result, patients flooded in all week, and surgical numbers were higher than ever. The team completed 107 surgeries on both children and adults.

Logistics Coordinator Joel Johnson told the touching story of Hamidu Elashu, an orphaned 18-year-old with a cleft lip that had never been repaired. Hamidu lives in a village four hours away, doing menial labor for a community that has taken him in. A wealthier friend of his heard about the CSI mission on the radio, and offered to accompany Hamidu to Kumasi (Hamidu insisted on paying his own way, however). "He was so shy when he came in," said Joel. "He wouldn't even look us in the face. He was used to fading into the woodwork. I

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told him, after the operation, that now he should look people in the eye—because now he looks like everyone else.” Hamidu’s friend was so impressed with Hamidu’s transformation, that the next day he brought in another cleft surgical candidate that he’d found on a bus!

Joel expressed what every team member feels after a trip like this: “To help these people is the best. They are so good to one another—siblings take care of each other—it’s very heartwarming. And they are so grateful for our help. It makes such an incredible difference in their lives.”

And coming up next:

Liberia - CSI is in the process of organizing a mission to Liberia in either November 2007 or January 2008. Liberia, which had been one of Africa’s more stable countries, was plunged into civil war in the 80’s and is only now beginning to recover. Drs. James Sidman and Peter Melchert, who visited last fall, found schools, factories, and even hospitals completely bombed out and denuded of all useable items. Most Liberians do not have running water or electricity, even in the capital city. Poverty is rampant, and, with only 35 doctors remaining in the entire country, health care is in crisis.

Sidman and Melchert did see signs of hope, however. They were greeted with tremendous enthusiasm, and toured three separate hospitals, which could possibly serve as CSI hosts. Many local and national dignitaries (including the First Lady!) went out of their way to encourage CSI’s interest, making it clear that they would do everything possible to help host a successful mission. Because supplies are almost nil in Liberia, CSI will have to bring along more medical equipment and supplies than usual on this critical mission.

CSI Welcomes New Board Members



*Christine & Peter
Melchert*



*Alison and John Zak
Sam, Sophie, and Cole*

Dr. Peter Melchert, is a graduate of St. Olaf College and the University of Minnesota Medical School, with a combined residency in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics. He is in practice with another of our CSI mission doctors, Dr. David Tetzlaff, at Pediatric Associates at Minneapolis Children’s Hospital and The Abbot Northwestern Service for adults. The somewhat unusual specialty allows them to treat children through adolescence and into adulthood, as well as other children or adults.

Peter became interested in CSI through former board member Mary Alice Seipp, and has been on three medical missions to Ghana. He observes that our work in Africa is “so important and compelling because the mission is not only one of service, but of education.” He feels that our goal in returning to one site many times is “to work ourselves out of a job” by training and learning along with our counterparts at the sites we visit. Peter said, of his recent mission to Ghana, that we are helping physicians and other medical professionals “build capacity” in training a cleft team there. He remarked that as a result of our three-year collaboration with Komfo Anokye Hospital, they now perform more cleft surgeries annually than they do at Johns Hopkins.

Volunteering with Children’s Surgery International combines Peter’s interests in medicine, international travel, and service with those of his wife, Christine, who is Chair of this year’s Passport to Smiles gala. As a team member on the 2005 medical mission to Ghana, Christine put her teaching skills to work as a Child Life Specialist. Both Melcherts enjoyed sharing the experience of working on a CSI team together and will serve as volunteers for this year’s major fund raiser.

Last fall, with CSI board member surgeon Jim Sidman, Peter traveled to Liberia, where they evaluated a site for a future mission. Passport to Smiles guests will be treated to a presentation on that trip at this year’s gala, to be held at the Minneapolis Club on April 21st.

For four or five years, **John Zak**, President and principal owner of NorthStar Surgical, Inc., has been donating disposable medical supplies to CSI missions throughout the world. His support and interest made him an excellent candidate for Board membership, and he agreed to join the board in November, 2006. John grew up in Rochester, Minnesota, in “the shadow of the Mayo Clinic”, and has always been interested in the medical world. He holds a degree in business from Minnesota State University, Mankato.

John and his wife Alison live in Prior Lake and are the busy parents of eight-year-old twins, Sam and Sophie, and 6-year-old Cole, all hockey players! The Zaks are active in St. Michael’s Catholic Church in Prior Lake, where their children attend school. As members of the volunteer association there, the Zaks assume many roles, including John being a hockey coach. Alison is a social studies teacher in the Prior Lake middle school.

John has had a long-term interest in children’s health care because of his business, but the interest was compounded when the twins were born and spent time in the neonatal unit at Minneapolis Children’s Hospital. Sophie and Sam’s first doctor was CSI Board member Bruce Ferrara, and the Zaks were very impressed with him and the neonatal unit there. At some point, John would like to go on a CSI mission when a spot is available; he feels that it would help him become a more effective board member, better able to establish policy and procedure, and raise funds.

We welcome John and Peter to the CSI board and look forward to working with them in the future.

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Hot Salsa at Passport to Smiles!

On April 21, 2007, Children's Surgery International will host the third annual "Passport to Smiles" fundraising gala at the Minneapolis Club from 5:30 - midnight. It will be a festive evening of sharing, socializing, fine dining, and salsa dancing to the music of Salsabrosa. Invitations will be coming out in early March. Be sure to reserve your spot promptly--last year's event was a complete sell out!

This year's event will feature a silent auction, an elegant dinner, a presentation on Liberia by Drs. Jim Sidman and Peter Melchert, remarks by Board Chair, Mike Fairbourne, and a live auction with auctioneer Colonel Tony Elfelt. **New this year:** after dinner from 9 p.m. to midnight, learn how to salsa dance with professional dance instructors, featuring music by Salsabrosa, a hot, local salsa band. Salsa, a popular form of Latin-American dance music, is danced alone or in pairs, and the basic step can be mastered in 10 minutes or less! Advanced tickets to attend the **dance-only portion** of the event will be on sale for \$50.

Another key part of this effort will be our **silent and live auctions**. We really need your help in order to make this a success. Whether you have items to donate, money to help us acquire items to donate, ideas for donations, or a desire to work with us on the gala night, we would be delighted to have your help! Please do whatever you can to make CSI's future mission trips a possibility.

All proceeds from this event will go towards funding future mission trips in sites such as Peru, Liberia, Ghana, and Mexico. Sponsorships are welcome and levels range from \$1,500 - \$25,000 per table. If you are interested in being a sponsor, please contact Sue Baysden at the CSI office.

To volunteer for this event or donate auction items, contact the CSI Office. We appreciate your efforts to attend or sponsor this event. Your generosity makes a difference and helps our future efforts to change children's lives around the world. Thank you for your support!

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