



Children's Surgery International

February, 2009

It is an extraordinary thing...

to have the opportunity to make a difference in a child's life. CSI had such an opportunity for the fourth year in a row in Hermosillo, Mexico, through the continued collaboration of St. Andrew's Clinic in Nogales, Arizona, and CIMA Hospital in Hermosillo. We, a team of 22 CSI volunteers, arrived at the hospital to a crowd of excited parents, children, and volunteers dressed as clowns and fairy godmothers. In unison, they greeted us with a well-rehearsed "Welcome to Hermosillo!" that brought tears to the eyes of many in our group. The trip would be quick – only two days of surgery – but from the start we knew that it would be special.

In just two days, we completed 38 surgeries, including cleft lip repair, cleft palate repair, and rhinoplasties. The hours were long, but we are all touched by the stories of our patients.

Amalia, for example. Amalia Milagros Torres Grijalva has not always gone by the name Amalia. Blanca, as she was known when she was born, was left in the hospital by her mother when she was born two months premature with a cleft palate. She spent her younger years in a state-run orphanage, and when she had her first surgery at two years of age, Blanca recovered in the home of one of the orphanage employees, Señora Amalia Grijalva Carrillo. Señora Amalia and little Blanca formed a strong bond that would prove unbreakable. Blanca became Amalia when she moved in with Señora Amalia, wanting to take her new mother's name as she began a new life. Señora Amalia already had two grown children, but she took Amalia in and worked with her, as she struggled to be understood by others. She always practiced saying certain words before going to the store to pick up a few items because others could not understand her. Señora Amalia assured me that this surgery would be life-changing for little Amalia, providing her with more confidence and security in her future. The same week that CSI operated to repair Amalia's palate, her adoption papers would become official and Amalia would finally be her legal name.

It was also a monumental week for the family of Juan Pablo, who was having his palate repaired, after CSI repaired his lip last year. Unlike most of the children we saw, Juan Pablo was there with only his father, whose wife, due to her anxiety over her son's surgery, went into labor early that morning and was at another hospital. By 10:40 a.m., Juan Pablo's little brother, Carlos Daniel, had been born.

Dan Adomitis, who won the spot in the *Gala* auction in the spring, filled one special spot on the trip. Dan is the President of Firestone and became involved with CSI through their Liberia mission. Firestone has 7,000 employees and more than 15,000 people living on their rubber farm in Liberia. Dan was able to watch surgeries, talk with families, and experience the difference CSI missions make first hand. He left hoping that CSI will one day come to the hospital Firestone is opening in December on its rubber farm in Liberia



Hermosillo Team: Diane Adamski, Dan Adomitis, Dodie Barr, Denise Blankenship, Shelagh Cofer, Cathy Cook, Jim Ducharme, Cathy Goedde, Shannon Hersey, Kris Herwig, Edlyn Kroening, Mark Lahr, Peter Melchert, Eric Moore, Francis Owusu, Kate Parrott, Ana Vasquez Rojas, Donna Schroeder, Elizabeth Tiffany, Christopher Tolan, Norie Wilson, and Jennifer Worley.

CSI's fourth year in Hermosillo was deemed "the most successful CSI mission in Hermosillo ever" by the lady volunteers from St. Andrew's Clinic. This is a testament to the effective collaboration that has been built between St. Andrew's Clinic, CIMA Hospital, and CSI.

Donations and Supplies Would Make A Big Difference

We are often asked "how can I help with a mission. What supplies are needed?" Every donation is viewed as a generous gift for a child. Whether you give money, organize a fundraiser, or donate recovery room bag supplies, we appreciate it. More importantly, the patients we operate on benefit. Every mission requires both medical and non medical supplies. Our medical supplies must be purchased and transported to our host country. No expired items are used. Our medical equipment is all purchased and maintained at the CSI office.

As we move forward in 2009 here is how you can help:

***Organize** a fundraiser or have a party with the money raised going to "give a child a smile" One of our CSI volunteers would be happy to come to a meeting and explain/send a video of previous missions.

***Collect** supplies needed for a mission. We will provide you a list of what goes into our recovery room bags. It is easy and your donations will go directly to the children we operate on. Things like crayons, notebooks, soap and toothpaste are just a few of the items needed.

***Sew** child-size hospital gowns or make small blankets.

(continued on page 2)

Donations and Supplies, continued from page 1

***Donate** a gift or service to our Passport to Smiles silent auction/fundraiser, held every year in April.

***Offer** CSI storage space. We need a temperature controlled space/storage locker.

We are also in urgent need of the following items for our next mission: Toothpaste (preferably 7 oz.), Cups with lids, Spiral notebooks (8x10 size).

We welcome donations organized by both kids and adults. Please contact the CSI office for more information.



Billy Madden entered a contest with Crayola. He got a lemonade stand from them and he raised about \$90 for CSI!

Young at Heart

CSI is rebuilding the Youth Committee for 2009. Lora Koppel, RN (CSI Board member) will become the new chairperson. The goal is to determine the requirements and roles youth volunteers can have with CSI. She is looking for 3 youth members (must be 18 years of age) and 3 adult members who are energized and willing to make a one-to-two hour commitment each month. Please contact CSI if interested.

CSI Board News

After several years of outstanding volunteerism with CSI, two gifted nurses have recently joined the Board of Children's Surgery International. **Lora Koppel**, who was featured in an earlier newsletter, is our new Youth Development Chair. She has also served on four missions; two to Ghana, one to Liberia and she recently returned from Peru, where she served as Clinical Coordinator. Lora is a nurse at Minneapolis Children's West where she works in Same Day Surgery. As Co-Chair of the April 18th Passport to Smiles Gala, Lora's CSI responsibilities are many-fold. Her husband Jim, and daughters Molly and Anna, lend ready hands to Lora's important work for CSI.

Our other outstanding new board member is nurse **Jan Gauger**, a neo-natal practitioner at Minneapolis Children's Hospital. A native of Chicago, Jan visited her Minnesota grandparents every summer in Winona, attended college at the College of St. Theresa there, and has been a Minnesotan ever since. She has been a practitioner since 1985, working for ten years in Rochester and the past twenty in Minneapolis.

Her love of children is evident in her work as well as on our missions where she has served on teams to Venezuela, Peru, Ghana and Mexico. Jan is pictured here with two of her Peruvian patients.



Her best memories are "the looks on the faces of the parents when they see that their children are all fixed," and continues that "there is nothing like it."

For years, Jan has always been ready to lend a helping hand in the packing and shipping of our medical supplies and is the new Chair of our Missions Committee, which helps develop new mission sites. She reports that she loves experiencing cultures with which she would not have been acquainted if she had not had the mission experience. Jan says, "We practice medicine here in such a technical way, but on missions, we get to really practice medicine, with very little paper work." She feels that we can expand our work beyond repairing lips and palates and is pleased that we are now performing urological surgeries in Peru.

Welcome New Board Chair

Children's Surgery International welcomes our new Board Chairman, **John Zak**, who succeeds the popular and long serving Chair Mike Fairbourne. Mike has been a CSI Board member since our earliest days and is always ready to help in many capacities. He has helped guide us to missions in many countries as well as helping establish personnel policies and procedures. John, President of NorthStar Surgical, is responsible for developing our new, productive business plan, and recently served on our mission to Liberia.

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