

Reflections of an SRW Gofer

By Mike Sweeney and Kathy Sweeney

In every organization, and on every mission trip, there's a place for a "gofer"—the person who is asked to make "things" that don't exist, fix broken "things" with no spare parts, or fabricate "things" we have back home that we need *here and now!* For Sharing Resources Worldwide, I'm a gofer! Do I feel important in this lowly position? ABSOLUTELY! When you're asked to make surgical staples from straight pieces of stainless steel with only a "bike stealer" as a cutting tool, or revamp adult leg braces into kid's braces, or help recast a little kid with club feet, you ABSOLUTELY feel like you've helped, even if only in a small way.

Gofers place the little pieces in the puzzle. SRW relies on gofers: sorters, loaders, drivers, and packers—not glorious jobs, but vital to our mission of helping kids. So let me share some gofer thoughts and experiences from our recent trip to Honduras. What a week of contrasts it was.

On Friday, January 21, 2012, Liz, Kathy, and I left Madison for Chicago at about 9:30 p.m. We were eager to reach our destination, undeterred by recent U.S. newscasts of the Peace Corps pulling out of Honduras, drug violence, shootings and kidnappings. We had concerns, but our Honduran contacts at Providence World Ministries had assured SRW team members that we would be safe as long as we used common sense and followed their in-country rules. At the back of our minds, as we traveled over icy roads toward O'Hare, was the likelihood that our flight out of Chicago would not leave on time for us to catch our Atlanta connection. To our surprise, it was not our flight from Chicago that was delayed, but our flight from Atlanta to Honduras!

Our plane was diverted twice due to bad weather in Atlanta, and we waited for fuel and for instructions from the Atlanta flight tower. Our pilot had never been ordered to set down twice in his 20 years of flying. In the end we spent that night—our last for a while in the U.S.—in a clean hotel with showers, enjoyed a guided tour of Atlanta's Coca Cola museum, and finished with a fine meal at a sushi bar.

Sunday, January 23, after a 3 a.m. wake-up call, we boarded our Atlanta flight to San Pedro at 5:30 a.m. As we continued our travels to Honduras, many of our patients were also beginning their journeys to see the Gringo doctors. We rode in the relative comfort of airplanes, slept in clean hotel rooms, and did not fear for our safety. Meanwhile, however, our patients had many travel hurdles to overcome. One mother and son made a journey as long as ours—13 hours. They began their trek with a two-hour walk on dusty mountain roads, then rode eight hours in a series of old yellow school buses over rough back roads; after that, they might take a cab, or walk more dusty roads. They were motivated by the prospect of seeing the medical team from America and their hope of hearing the words, "We can help your child."

Every mission trip has its stories, and it is the stories of changed lives and the relationships with our patients and their families that motivate us to overcome obstacles and make our journeys to places of need. I share the following stories to give you some idea of the people and experiences of a "typical" medical mission week.

A 75-year-old grandmother brought her 18-month-old grandson to the clinic. This

little guy, Luis, born with a club foot, was abandoned by his mother at 28 days of age. Though she also had to care for her 40-year-old disabled daughter and her four children, Luis' grandmother found a way to bring Luis to the only

people who could offer any hope. After Luis' corrective surgery, Grandma asked if his white leg cast could be made dark blue. We were puzzled by this request until she explained that she thought a darker cast would look cleaner as Luis scooted around on the dirt floors of her house. She finally agreed that just keeping a sock over the cast would do the job.

Last year, a woman named Karena had brought her daughter from a village eight hours away to see if the SRW team could help her child, born very prematurely and suffering from cerebral palsy that made walking and balance difficult. Dr. Noonan was successful in treating the little girl. Karena returned with her daughter this year to show us the positive results. This is



Karena helps another mom and child after surgery

our payback! Her gratitude was so great and she considered the service of the medical team so important that she began counseling other women in her village about the opportunity the SRW team and the Providence World Ministries hospital could offer their children. She brought several women and children with her to the clinic and stayed all week, encouraging mothers as they entrusted their children to the medical team. The support and assistance she offered were free, gratis! What a way to give back! And her giving will go on: she's begun studying physical therapy so she can continue serving her people.

In a bus station in San Pedro, the father of a previous patient of our SRW team saw a young boy with a medical problem similar to that of his daughter. He approached the mother, telling her his own daughter's story and describing the services she could expect at Providencia hospital. He gave her his phone number and promised to get her the dates the SRW team would be in Honduras. He not only kept his promise, but personally arranged for the child to travel to Providencia hospital, which is no small feat, as she lived far from the hospital—at least three hours' drive. Thus another parent passed along the good word, contributing in his own way to the healing of an afflicted child.



Luis and his grandmother

Babies born with club feet rarely receive treatment in the poorest Honduran communities. Because a mother whose child was previously treated by an SRW team recognized the ailment of her friend's newborn, she encouraged the mother to bring her 14-day-old infant to the SRW doctors for an evaluation. Dr.

Noonan was able to begin the process of correction by casting her two times during his week in Honduras. As she grows, her treatment will continue with multiple recastings by Dr. Silvio Gonzalez,

our Honduran orthopedic surgeon and partner. Thanks to such early intervention, she may never need surgery. And she will live a normal life—walking, running and playing like all children should—not crippled by a correctable condition.

Teenage girls all over the world are concerned



Newborn Maria waits for cast to be applied to her club foot



Extra toes in the wrong place



Moises and his mom before surgery

November 2011 Honduras Mission Trip

By John Schacherl DDS

On November 5, 2011, our dental team set out on its fourth mission trip to the city of Siguatepeque, Honduras. This year, our dental team included Drs. John and Kate Schacherl, assistants Tashina Kroll and Brenda Maxwell, and hygienists Tanya Kudinenko and Denise Jacobsen. Dr. Angie Cotey from Mount Horeb also joined our team. For Tashina, Tanya, Denise and Dr. Cotey this was their first mission trip.

Several months prior to each mission, Drs. John and Kate Schacherl and their Verona office staff plan and work with Mary Dowling at SRW to arrange for the pre-shipment of needed equipment that cannot be hand-carried to Honduras. Most of the equipment has been generously donated by dental offices and dental supply companies. This equipment is tested, broken down, labeled, and packed for shipment. It then begins its journey to Central America, first by truck, then by container shipment by boat to the dock in Honduras. This year, instead of arriving at the dock in Honduras, it arrived in Guatemala. It finally made its way to the dock in Honduras where it would end up sitting, tied up in red tape, for the duration of our mission. Fortunately, we learned of this shortly prior to our departure. We took inventory of the supplies in the shipment that were needed for the trip and were able to hand carry these with us. It meant doing without the larger pieces of dental equipment (chairs, etc.) that were in the container.

On this trip, we saw and completed work on 125 patients, the majority of whom were children. We were again able to perform dentistry at the Honduras clinic much as we do here in Wisconsin. As is always the case, the patients we saw were so warm and friendly. They welcomed us and were very grateful for the care we were able to provide.

Even more rewarding are the results we have seen over the past several years. From the first mission trip, Drs. John and Kate were passionate in their unwillingness to simply extract teeth. They were relentless in insisting that the team use portable x-rays on site for patient diagnosis. And, they were committed to working with patients and teachers at local schools to help both children and adults become aware of how good dental health practices can eliminate tooth decay. Now, four years later, we could not be more pleased by the results of their unwavering commitment to these ideals. What has this meant to the dental missions? The impact has been huge. Groups of students now brush their teeth daily in their classrooms with brushes and toothpaste provided by our team. Children and adults of Siguatepeque with whom we are connected no longer have an expectation that they will lose their teeth. And, it means that these children and adults of Siguatepeque have come to appreciate the importance of caring for their teeth by daily brushing. For our team, it means that our missions can focus on restorative care, including cleanings and tooth restoration (fillings), rather than extractions.

In the dental clinic, we are in the process of installing a vacuum (suction) system. The pump for the system was purchased from a dairy farm in Mondovi, WI through the help of one of our practice patients. It was repaired and is currently on site and wired to go. On our next mission, we will need to run the piping and drain system to make it operational. The new system, which Dr. Schacherl will finish up on our next mission, will be much quieter and a great addition to the clinic.

Save the date and help SRW Celebrate!

Sharing Resources Worldwide will be ten years old this fall! Please mark your calendars; everyone is invited to an evening of fun and celebration, October 13, 2012. Invitations will arrive in your mailboxes September 2012. ●

Angie Cotey, DDS commented, "I was a late addition to the team and am grateful to Drs. John and Kate Schacherl for inviting me to participate, and also to Mary for helping me obtain my airline ticket and get my documents in to the Honduran government in time. I did not know what to expect since it was my first time on the trip. I was very impressed with the dental setup, and that we had the ability to do almost all the same dental procedures that we do at home. I had previously been on a dental

mission trip where we were only able to do extractions without x-rays. It was very gratifying to provide comprehensive care. All the patients were wonderful to work on and very grateful. I felt very well taken care of by our Honduran team of volunteers. Our young translators were also excellent and worked so hard keeping our patients informed and comfortable. Everyone on the dental and eye teams was very welcoming, and we worked great as a team. I was truly impressed by all the love and generosity. I can't wait to return to Honduras."

Hygienist Tanya Kudinenko summed up this experience when she said, "It was my first time in Honduras. What an experience! Now I fully realize that what we read in newspapers and hear on TV is not always true. I am so honored to have been



The entire SRW team traveling to Honduras in Nov. 2011: Tatyana Kudinek, RDH; Brenda Maxwell, DA; Aviva Gal, MD; Pat Kreibich, RN; Denise Jacobson, RDH; Leslie Hill, translator; Mary Dowling, RN; Kate Schacherl, DDS; Angela Cotey, DDS; John Alameda, RN; Tashina Kroll, DA; John Schacherl, DDS; Carrie Messer, Ocularist; Robert Bechtel, MD

a part of this mission, and to have shared my life and professional experience with the people of Siguatepeque. I want to thank Mary Dowling who put this trip together, Dr. Schacherl for equipping this clinic, and the Honduran people for their hospitality, kindness and strength. I felt very safe and protected during this week. I am so pleased that we were able to treat over 100 patients and that we got to know them and their families. Overall, this was a very positive experience, and I'm looking forward to participating on more trips in the future." ●



Maria is one of 15 who received a new prosthetic eye from Carrie Messer, Ocularist, on our Nov. 2011 mission.



Maria is very happy with her new eye—and so is Carrie!

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Support, Commitment and Hope

By Elizabeth Shimon PA

This was my fourth year volunteering with the SRW Orthopedic team to Siguatepeque, Honduras. We flew from the U.S. to Honduras, but due to inclement weather in our connecting city of Atlanta, we were forced to spend our first night there instead of in Honduras. When we finally arrived the following day, we were almost eight hours behind schedule. The entire team transitioned from travel mode to working mode in a matter of minutes after arriving. Thankfully, Doctora Bertha Turcios and Dr. Silvio Gonzalez arrived early to the clinic and had begun screening patients prior to our arrival. Their unceasing support and commitment to helping the children of Honduras has been a blessing on each of my previous trips, but it was all the more evident this year! Thanks to their assistance, the team was able to unpack, setup the ORs for surgery and screen 84 children into the remaining evening and the next morning. As a bonus to those who were returning members, several children whom we had seen a year ago had waited for us to arrive. It was wonderful to see them and how their lives had changed over a year's time since their surgery procedure.

Despite the chaotic start to our week, we were able to do 34 surgeries. There are a variety of orthopedic cases done each year from clubfeet and hip deformities to extra digits with everything in between. Each child was special and no matter how large or small the condition and need, the team treated each one with equal importance. This year, the children who touched me most were the children with Cerebral Palsy (CP). CP is seen in the United States but most children are able to receive medical care and aid from an early age. CP is caused by damage to the developing brain during pregnancy, childbirth or up to the age of three. It results in problems with muscle tone (i.e., slouching over while sitting), motor development of the arms and legs with stiffness of the joints as well as problems with coordination.

In Honduras, the children who are born with CP rely solely on their families for care

and support, as the government and medical community are not able to provide help. When a child has CP, we are unable to "fix" or "cure" their problem. We are, however, able to provide assistance with basic care needs through surgery. Often the surgeries that are recorded in medical journals are the rare and more complicated procedures that are seen when abroad. The surgeries that were performed for the children with CP are not those types of procedures. Depending upon each child's condition, tendon releases for the joints that had contractures (stiffness or loss of motion in the joint) were done. If you think of a tendon as a band, the tendon release surgery cuts the bands that are too tight to allow motion at that joint. Increasing range of motion in the knee, hip and ankle results in greater comforts of daily living, such as sitting more comfortably in a chair or allowing family to more easily provide basic hygiene.

This may not seem like much to Americans, living in a world where health care and specialists are readily available. In Honduras, these



Liz and Marge share a fun moment on the Honduras mission in January 2012.

basic things can drastically change the lives of that child and his or her caregivers. Seeing the bright smile on each child's face and witnessing the amazing dedication and love of their family members has touched us all. I am grateful that I was allowed the privilege of being a part of this team, and for a moment, a part of that child's life. ●

A Simple Thing to Give

The following is an email note from Emily after I inquired about how she knew about us and what was her impetus for supporting us for several years with her regular donations.... since I had no idea who she was.

I read about Sharing Resources in a local publication—I forget which one—and supporting your organization is important to me because I was temporarily disabled 7 years ago when a drunk driver hit me and broke my femur and pelvis. Since the injury I have recovered and thrived, but it goes without saying that adapting to a world that was not built with me in mind was one of the most challenging experiences of my life. I had full support from my family, friends, colleagues,

and medical staff, and I had full access to the necessary medical supplies. These are the things that got me through. I also had to take care of my father while he was dying from cancer, and simple adaptive equipment allowed him to pass away with greater dignity than if we had been without. Medical supplies are a simple thing to give, their benefit is direct and measurable, and they make a tremendous difference in an individual's pride and sense of self-worth when they are dealing with a permanent or temporary disability or illness. I'm proud of your organization, and I consider it a privilege to support it.

*Sincerely,
Emily Smith*

Returning to Nicaragua

In February 2012, SRW director, Mary Dowling, and eye surgeon and SRW board member, Dr. Neil Lucchese, travelled to Nicaragua to determine whether SRW could send a medical team to Matagalpa. Their hope was to identify an unmet need that SRW could accommodate.

Seven years had passed since an SRW team last traveled to Nicaragua in 2005. Mary's personal acquaintance with Matagalpa precedes the existence of SRW, as she volunteered 12 years ago in the operating rooms of the public hospital—the only hospital in Nicaragua's second-largest city.

Good contacts and careful planning—on both ends!—are essential to the success of a medical mission. Mary and Neil met with representatives of SRW's prospective host organization, Casa Materna Mary Ann Jackman, and then with the director of the hospital. It soon became clear that there is no one in Matagalpa who can do surgery for children with crossed eyes. Here was a need that SRW could meet. The

hospital director confirmed that a medical team would be welcome, and promised to help with the shipping process, and to grant SRW the use of an operating room for a week.

David Periera's translating assistance helped to assure the success of these important meetings in Matagalpa, and we thank him for his contribution. David is a Nicaragua native who now lives in Madison.

An SRW medical team will return to Nicara-

gua in 2013 to do corrective surgery for children with crossed eyes. A trip like this can only happen through the cooperation of many people, from translators to hospital personnel to volunteers, here in Madison and in Matagalpa. Our volunteers, both here and abroad, are the best, and we are very grateful. ●

Coming up for SRW

June 2012—shipment of supplies and equipment goes to Honduras

September 15, 2012—Dental team and general pediatric screening team travels to Siguatepeque, Honduras to work for the week

September 22, 2012—Pediatric eye team travels to Siguatepeque, Honduras to do strabismus surgery and make prosthetic eyes for the week

January 2013—Pediatric orthopedic team returns to Siguatepeque, Honduras for the week

February 2013—Pediatric orthopedic hand and upper extremity team returns to Siguatepeque, Honduras ●

MISSION

Through the delivery of excellent health care Sharing Resources Worldwide (SRW) endeavors to improve the quality of life of disadvantaged populations around the world.

VISION

By organizing and supporting medical teams, SRW will provide surgical, medical, dental care, and eye care for disadvantaged people. When possible, SRW will work closely with in-country partners to deliver these kinds of care. SRW will provide on-site medical professionals and institutions with donated supplies and equipment and allow them to consistently offer needed services for their needy populations. SRW's primary concern will be meeting the needs of children 18 years old and younger.

VALUES

SRW's board, director, and medical team members will provide needed care and treatment internationally, while consistently demonstrating the following core values:

Excellence
Respect
Compassion
Accountability

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about their appearance. Andrea came to the hospital with an extra toe growing at a right angle from the side of her left foot. Andrea had grown up not only with the intense physical pain of stubbing that toe frequently, but with the even greater pain of her peers' ridicule, since she could not wear shoes or hide her anomaly from them. Removing this extra toe—a simple procedure for our SRW team—was no small miracle in the life of Andrea, who can now wear shoes, feel normal among her friends, and grow and mature with a new sense of confidence.

Then there's "Speedy," whose real name is Moises. Born with club feet that were never treated, he came to the clinic three years ago with both of his feet turned backwards! Because it was already late in the week, the

surgery schedule for that mission team was unfortunately filled. But Dr. Noonan promised Speedy that he would be first on the list the following year. Last year, Speedy showed up as planned, and amazed the team by running around the clinic for two days on his backwards feet. Dr. Noonan prepared for this complex case by consulting with colleagues in the U.S. and Europe via email. The surgery went well, but when Moises awoke in the recovery room with two casts that went to his hips, he was not happy! Over the next months Honduran surgeon Dr. Gonzalez changed his casts several times, and the final result was a happy Moises.



A happy Moises and his mom after surgery

When his casts were removed for the final time several months later, Moises thanked the doctors and said a prayer for them. This year, at his re-check, "Speedy" was all smiles and so was his mother. He now plays football like his buddies. His feet are not perfect, but they work so much better than before that "Speedy" can now live a normal, active life.

Seeing such changed lives is what motivates our teams. As Dr. David Mann, a pediatric orthopedic surgeon and member of many SRW mission teams, once commented, "If we can help a child in some small manner... maybe he or she will be a future Honduran president, or a better father, or a better brother or a better worker." Offering such help, we receive much more than we give. One of our greatest joys is seeing kids from previous years come in for a checkup and a photo, knowing that they are now free of their handicaps and do not need more surgery. There are often happy tears, smiles and gratitude.

On the last day of our 2012 Honduras mission, as Dr. David Conrad and I were returning to San Pedro Sula to catch our plane to the States, David asked Douglas (of Providence World Ministries staff) what he felt was the "single most significant thing" the Honduran people needed to improve their lives. Without hesitating, Douglas said education and pride in their country. Hondurans need to see the beauty of their people, their traditions, and their country—cherishing the beauty of Honduras while also incorporating into their lives the good ways of the rest of the world. In a very small way, we are attempting to help our friends in Honduras make this happen... one child, one family, one school, one village at a time. This requires the cooperation of many people ranging from supporters of SRW to nurses to doctors to technicians to gofers. We give thanks for every single one! ●

Crunching the Numbers after Ten Years of Service

This year marks SRW's tenth anniversary. Many changes have taken place during that time, but our mission remains the same: Through the delivery of excellent health care, Sharing Resources Worldwide endeavors to improve the quality of life of disadvantaged populations around the world. Our volunteers are amazing people, and their faithful service is the reason we can continue accomplishing our goal to serve children worldwide by meeting medical needs.

Since the inception of SRW in January 2002:

- SRW has provided \$6,000,000 worth of service through medical missions.
- Five eyeglass missions in four countries have served 4,245 visually impaired people.
- 22 medical missions have been completed, involving 127 different volunteers and serving 5,776 patients.
- 53 volunteers have served on more than one mission.
- SRW has completed four dental mission trips and set up a complete dental clinic.
- Four mission teams have provided prosthetic eyes.
- SRW has served 28 countries with medical supplies and equipment.
- More than 1,300 have been served in Honduras alone since 2005.
- Dozens of volunteers have served our warehouse operations.

On behalf of the SRW Board, and children all over the world, a big thank you to all our volunteers and supporters. You are the ones who make our mission a reality! ●

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With Much Gratitude

There are many individuals and companies, both local and from across the U.S., that assist with surgical teams by donating funds and/or supplies. The success of our missions is very dependent on these donors.

We wish to thank them and acknowledge their contributions to our efforts. There are too many to list here...but we thank you all!

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SRW accepts gifts of appreciated stocks and mutual fund shares. Your gift of such qualifies for a tax deduction based of full market value of your stock or mutual fund shares plus you avoid the capital gains tax that would otherwise arise from the sale of stock or mutual fund shares.

New Office for SRW

In April, 2011, Sharing Resources Worldwide moved to a new location on the south side of Madison. This space gives us smaller, but adequate, room for warehouse/storage of supplies we must gather for our missions. It also gives us office space for meetings and storage of temperature-sensitive supplies. We are also very easy to reach, just off of the beltline.

This space has been very well received and we have had many positive comments about how much brighter and more welcoming this space is. We are pleased with our new location and hope you will stop buy sometime to see it, too.

We are at 2405 Industrial Drive—just off of South Towne Drive off of the south beltline, across from Ryder Truck Rental.

Call Mary for our hours: 608-445-8503.

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