



## 2003 Annual Report

2003 was a mixed year for Health for Humanity. From the beginning of the year we knew that our surgical mission was going to coincide with the General Election in Guatemala. Historically election time in Guatemala has been associated with increased levels of violence and predictions were that 2003 would be no different, particularly as one of the former military dictators was running for President. Initially we tried to change the dates for our mission but unfortunately for us, the Obras Sociales Hospital in Antigua was fully booked with other volunteer teams around that time.

As the year progressed, we kept a watchful eye on events in Guatemala while proceeding with our fundraising activities. In early May we again held a very successful Regatta thanks to Sunsail Canada and their Skippers who provided 12 sailboats and an exciting afternoon of racing in English Bay. Later that month, Cesar Figueroa and the Fraternity to Help Guatemalan Children organized the second annual Concert for a Smile. This year's concert was again a great success thanks to the generosity and talents of the performers who donated their services.

By August we were receiving reports of increasing unrest in Guatemala and this culminated with 3 days of violent demonstrations in Guatemala City. The fate of our 2003 mission had to be decided in early September due to cancellation fees for airfare and accommodation. The board of Health for Humanity unanimously agreed, at its meeting of September 2<sup>nd</sup>, to postpone the Nov 2003 mission until 2004. This was not an easy decision for the board and was met with disappointment from various team members and from the Obras Sociales Hospital who had already scheduled patients for our team.

However the board did not feel that they could guarantee the safety of team members. The board's decision was based on advice from the Canadian Embassy in Guatemala, the Board of the Fraternity to Help Guatemalan Children, and various personal contacts in Guatemala.

We have now started to plan our surgical mission for 2004 which leaves November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2004 for two weeks. So far, the changeover of Government in Guatemala seems to be proceeding peacefully and the new president has invited the Mayan Nobel Peace Prize winner, Rigoberta Menchu to be part of the new Government. Many of the physicians, nurses and support personnel from our successful mission in 2002 have already signed up to participate, and we look forward to repeating this success in November 2004.

Funds raised for 2003 will be rolled over and used for the 2004 mission. However we have just heard from Faith in Practice, the US based volunteer organization overseeing the volunteer work at the Obras Sociales Hospital, that plans are underway for much needed renovations and expansion of the Operating Rooms. They have requested that all volunteer teams working at the Obras will make contributions to this valuable project. Therefore this year our fundraising efforts are proceeding with a view to supporting this project.

Thank you all again for your contributions in 2003. Please again consider Health for Humanity in 2004.

Sincerely

Mike Morton and the Board of Directors for Health for Humanity.

*Caring for Those in Need*

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