

Health for Humanity

Health for Humanity Annual Report 2002

Health for Humanity is one year old and it's time to bring all our members and supporters up to date with our achievements in 2002 and our plans for 2003. A little over a year ago our founding Board Members met for the first time to discuss the formation of Health for Humanity and write our Mission Statement and Goals. Following this meeting the society was registered as a non-profit society and we applied for charitable tax status. Although we had heard horror stories about the application process, with much perseverance, we were approved as a charitable organisation within three months.

During the early part of 2002 Board Members put considerable effort into organising the society and making arrangements for our first mission to Antigua, Guatemala. These efforts included creation of our website www.h4h.ca making travel and accommodation arrangements, recruitment of team members and coordinating our efforts here and with our partner organisations in Guatemala. As we have all learned, there are many frustrations in making arrangements in Guatemala and I want to thank all Board Members for the hard work that led to the success of our first mission.

Fund raising was another initiative that occupied us throughout the year. Thanks to Nancy and David Martin and the management of Sunsail Canada who donated their fleet of 40ft sailboats for an afternoon of racing in English Bay. We were able to raise \$8,000.00 from this event. Our second fundraising venture was organised by the Fraternity to Help Guatemalan Children. The Fraternity have been working hard for several years to raise money and school supplies to assist with education in needy areas of Guatemala. When they heard about our plans for surgery in Guatemala they immediately set to work organising a concert of Latin American music. Concerto para una Sonrisa was held in June at the Surrey Arts Centre with all the performers donating their talent and time. It was an excellent evening of entertainment with \$3000.00 raised. This covered the expenses of bringing young children from far away villages to the hospital in Antigua for much needed plastic surgery. We have also received corporate sponsorship from Aventis Canada, and several members of our group have worked hard to collect personal donations. In addition we have to acknowledge the generosity of many individuals and companies in the Canadian Pharmaceutical and Medical Equipment and Supply Industries. All of our medications and supplies for this year's mission were donated. Special thanks are due to Mike Wallace-Tarry of Datex-Ohmeda who was able to supply us with an anesthetic machine and 4 monitoring systems for use in Guatemala. Mike then joined the team to provide technical support in Guatemala. A complete list of all our donors and supporters can be found on the website www.h4h.ca



2002 Team In Front of the Hospital, Antigua Guatemala

After almost a year of preparation late on Friday November 15th our team of 36 individuals, 12 physicians, 13 nurses, 1 biomedical engineer and 10 support persons finally arrived in Guatemala. Saturday gave us a chance to acclimatise with a tour of Antigua and the Obras Sociales del Hermano Pedro Hospital where we were going to work for the next two weeks. Sunday was our busiest day with our physicians seeing more than 300 patients in the clinic while the nurses and support personnel unpacked 72 bags of supplies and prepared the operating rooms for surgery. Over the next two weeks we completed 140 surgeries in Antigua including cleft lip and palate repairs, hysterectomies, cholecystectomies and hernia repairs. While plastic surgery has the most visible benefits, gyne and general surgery also have a major impact on the lives of the patients and their families. After surgery patients are able to return to full activity at

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work or at home. Some of our team members also spent some time working at the Behrhorst Hospital in Chimaltenango. Although this was not as successful as we had hoped some cervical cancer treatments and tubal ligations were performed. This was the first time that a Canadian volunteer team had worked at the Behrhorst and many lessons were learned for us to build on next year.

Our team also accomplished some other firsts on this mission. This year our team members and the local Guatemalan healthcare professionals exchanged valuable knowledge. During our two weeks we had 2 Guatemalan general surgeons, 3 gynecological surgeons and several local nurses working with us. We hope to build on this educational aspect of our visits next year and have more local surgeons and Anesthesiologists working with us.

Also, for the first time, this year we worked with Todd Peterson, president of a new NGO, Partner in Health. Todd works out in the rural villages and organises patients in need of surgery to come to Antigua and stay until they are ready to return to their villages. This year he found all our plastic surgery patients, some of whom travelled several hours on foot before the 6 hour bus ride to Antigua. He took care of their accommodation in Antigua and organised a translator as most of these patients spoke only one of the 21 Mayan languages. We look forward to working more closely with Todd and his organisation next year as he is reaching the most needy of patients.



Telma - Our First Patient 4 Hours Postop

While in Guatemala 5 of our board members attended a meeting of Canadian Volunteer Organisations hosted by the Canadian Ambassador in Guatemala City. Following this meeting a senior member of the Embassy staff visited the Hospital in Antigua to see our work first hand. We will continue to work on this liaison with the hope of acquiring some funding from the Canadian International Development Agency.

Finally on this visit another board member spent some time interviewing a selection of those working to improve healthcare in Guatemala, including United Nations officials, other NGO officials, local doctors, nurses and hospital administrators. She also interviewed a selection of patients both indigenous and ladino from urban and rural areas. The purpose of this was to gain a better understanding of the needs of patients in Guatemala to give direction to Health for Humanity as we plan future initiatives.

As we move into 2003 plans are already underway for our next visit to Antigua which is scheduled to leave November 14th and return November 30th. Returning members have until the reunion to be held February 1st to secure their place for 2003 after which we will be accepting applications from other professionals who have expressed an interest in joining us.

Plans are also well underway for this years major fundraising events, the Sunsail Sailing Regatta and the Fraternity to Help Guatemalan Children's Latin American Concert for a Smile. Both these events were a great success last year and we encourage you to join us again this year. Also to those corporate and individual sponsors who generously donated last year please remember us again this year. All donations of \$20.00 or more receive a tax deductible receipt and we remind you that all members of our teams volunteer their time and pay for their own transportation and accommodation. All donations are used strictly for medical expenses and patient care in Guatemala.

Thanks again for your support and hard work in 2002.
Mike Morton. President, Health for Humanity.