

Health for Humanity Service Society

2007 Annual Report

This year has been another full year of activity for our Society with several new undertakings to report. The year started with our first exploratory mission to Baguio City in the Philippines and ended with our fifth annual mission to Guatemala. Although interest naturally focuses on the surgical teams, and the life changing surgery they perform, it is important to note that these missions would not happen without the dedicated work of our board members and other volunteer members throughout the year.

Preparation for the Guatemala mission starts immediately upon our return and in the case of the Philippines mission, a separate organising team had been working since June 2006. As soon as we return from a mission, the Board thoroughly reviews feedback from the team leaders and individual team member feedback forms and incorporates recommendations into future planning. At this time, the Board also appoints team leaders and mission planning committees to carry out recruitment for the new team.

Fund raising is an important activity that continues throughout the year. This year we are grateful to the Tula Foundation which has become a major sponsor of our work in Guatemala. Tula foundation executive director, Eric Petersen spent some time with our team in Guatemala and has committed to support H4H again next year. Semiahmoo and Millennium Rotary groups in White Rock have continued to support H4H in 2007. Also we have to thank our Campbell River members, and their community, who raised a record amount through their dance and very entertaining silent and live auction event. Finally we have to thank many individual donors whose contributions, large and small, are still necessary for us to provide surgery in the developing world. These donated funds pay only for medical services and patient care expenses. These include the cost of using the operating rooms, surgical supplies and medications, laboratory tests, transporting many of our patients from the rural villages, and providing food and accommodation for our recovering patients. We emphasize that all of our medical teams travel and stay in Guatemala at their own expense; all our organisers are volunteers and we have minimal administrative overhead.

Another essential year round activity is the collection of Medications and supplies necessary to perform surgery in Guatemala. We have many board and team members that volunteer their time to coordinate the collection, sterilisation, and packing of all the surgical supplies. We are grateful to many individuals and companies in the Canadian Pharmaceutical and Medical Equipment and Supply industries who have continued to support our work. The majority of our medications and supplies for this year's mission were donated. A complete list of our donors and supporters can be found on our website www.h4h.ca

In January, an exploratory surgical team of 7 physicians, 12 nurses and 4 support staff worked for 1 week in Baguio General Hospital and performed 43 surgical procedures in 2 operating rooms. They also provided education to the local resident medical and nursing staff, and donated some much needed medical equipment and supplies to the hospital. Our mission was well received by the hospital and the community, and we intend to return in the near future with another surgical team.

In November, our Guatemala Team included 14 physicians, 14 nurses and 6 support staff. For the first time we were able to use 4 operating rooms. On triage day our surgeons assessed approximately 155 patients, and during the two week mission in November, our team completed 144 surgeries, including cleft lip and palate repairs, hysterectomies, cholecystectomies, and hernia repairs. All of these surgeries have a major impact on the lives of the patients as they enable a return to full activity. Again, we worked with local professionals and there was a useful exchange of knowledge. It is now 11 years since the end of the civil war and the return of democracy. Each year on our return we check for improvements in the healthcare available in Guatemala, but again very little had changed. Perhaps the new government elected the week before our arrival will make a difference during its 4 year term, but for the present there remains a need for our volunteer services, and H4H will continue to sending surgical teams as long as necessary.

Our next mission to Antigua is scheduled to depart November 7th, 2008 and we are considering returning to the Philippines in February 2009. Thanks again to our Board, team members, and other volunteers for their commitment and hard work. Thanks also to all our donors for their support in 2007.

Cindy Masaro - President, Health for Humanity.