

MAY 2012



## this issue

May Mission Team Stories

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Team Photos

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*Stephen Sample*

## April/May 2012 IEI goes to two locations!

For the first time ever, International Eye Institute had volunteers participating in more than one mission location. On April 20th, thirty three volunteers left for Guatemala City airport from different locations across the United States.

After arriving in Guatemala City, the group travelled by bus to Nuevo Progreso in San Marcos province, a 6 hour drive from the capital. After a successful week of surgery a smaller part of that original group broke off in Santiago de Atitlan and worked for another week at the Hospitalito Atitlan.

Over 700 patients were seen in the two week period by five Ophthalmologists, three Optometrists, a Pediatrician, Dentist and CRNA. In addition, multiple clinical technicians, RN's and assistants helped to round out the team. This included a technician specialized in microscope repair who was essential to the mission,

making it possible for the surgeons to see what they were operating on. 181 surgeries were performed and an estimated 60 patients received dental treatment. Two corneal transplants were performed by corneal specialist Dr. Pulin Shah, who was accompanied by Ophthalmology resident Dr. Soledad Romero.

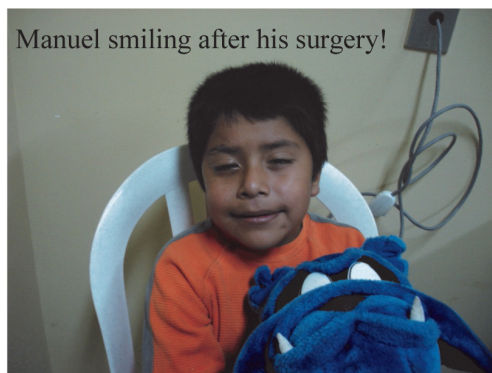
Dr. Alison Granier returned to Guatemala this year for the first time as a surgeon, having participated on previous mission trips as a resident. She was joined by her sister, medical student Hillary Chisholm.

Dr. Dave Dance, an ophthalmologist from Portland, Oregon worked with us for the second time and was accompanied by his uncle, Dr. Bill McDonald a dentist from Bellevue, Washington. Dr. McDonald was assisted by his very capable son Blake who is studying dental technology at university. Look inside for some personal and touching stories about this years experience!

**In a letter to a friend  
Dr. StormoGipson,  
President of IEI wrote:**

“We finished 2 weeks of surgery yesterday, one week at a new hospital location called Hospitalito. Both weeks were very successful. Our team saw over 700 patients, and did 181 eye surgeries plus 60 dental procedures. Just one standout patient I'd like to share was a woman who had been blind for 7 years! I examined her at Hospitalito in Santiago Atitlan. When I say blind, I mean she could only see light vs. dark. Her family said she had not been able to see her food on her plate for 7 years. Of course, not only was she very limited by her blindness, but the family told me that she required constant care and help to do her activities of daily living.... bathing, eating etc. Dr. Dance removed her white cataract with a special technique much more difficult than the surgery we do in the U.S., and put in a new, clear lens. On taking off her patch the next morning, she exclaimed "I can see my son again!" Both she and her son burst into tears and began hugging Dr. Dance with the son's tears flowing down Dr. Dance's neck. I think I detected a tear in the doctor's eye as well. These trips are very rewarding and help us to keep a healthy perspective on life. We live in a constant state of gratitude! It makes life much more meaningful and enjoyable. Thanks for your support.”

Mike Oswald, CRNA, and Teresa Oswald



Manuel smiling after his surgery!

### Hospitalito Atitlán, Guatemala

By Michael Oswald CRNA, MNA (Anesthesia) and Teresa Oswald

One afternoon during a lunch break, my wife Teresa and I decided to visit a local school in Santiago. In the past, we have had great success in finding children at various schools in Guatemala who have an eye condition known as strabismus or crossed eyes. This school visit was particularly successful because we were able to meet Manuel. With the assistance of the school director, we climbed the stairs up to the second level and met with Manuel and his teacher. His teacher spoke of Manuel's double vision related to his crossed eye. Previously she had spoken with Manuel's mother and asked that he be seen by a local Doctor. Money was hard to come by in Manuel's family, so his mother simply accepted Manuel as he was instead of seeking medical attention. His teacher also explained that many families simply do not understand that certain vision conditions or eye aesthetics can be corrected. She described to us how she has taught her students to be accepting of all people and to not judge or ridicule another based upon appearance.

After speaking with Manuel about his condition and how it limited his abilities in the classroom, we then asked if we could call his mother and find out if she could bring him to our clinic. Right about then she appeared out of nowhere. I described the surgery that her son would need as the director translated my Spanish into Tz'utujil. Manuel smiled as we described the potential outcome of his surgery. We told them to meet us at the clinic the next morning at 0800.

The next morning as we hiked up to Hospitalito, our thoughts were with Manuel. Would his mother take this opportunity to improve the life of her son? Or would the fear of the unknown prevent her from coming? To our surprise Manuel was outside the clinic doors waiting with his family to be seen at 0800. He had been asking for Miguel (me!). His smile of anticipation will forever be in our mind's eye. He was not afraid. He was simply excited to have his eye corrected.

After meeting with Dr. StormoGipson, the surgical plan was put into place. On Thursday he would have strabismus surgery on his right eye.

On Thursday morning, Manuel was the second case of the day. In the preoperative area, he had Teresa and all of the nurses laughing hysterically because of his contagious laugh. I then brought him into the operating room and asked him to be my helper. The nurses had given him a large bulldog stuffed animal that he jokingly named after me, "Miguel". He climbed onto the operating room table without fear, smiling all the while. Gently I placed the anesthesia mask over his mouth and said to him, "respirá profundo amigo" as he drifted off to sleep. After a successful surgery, we took Manuel into the recovery room where his nurse Denise sweetly spoke to him in English, but with a tone of love and compassion that anyone could understand.

Manuel spent that night in the hospital as he cuddled with Miguel the bulldog by his side. His mother had gone out to get him some Horchata to drink and was, as most are after surgery in Guatemala, concerned about his diet. I could see in her eyes the love of a mother for her son as she tried to help him through the process in her own way.

*Continued on back*

“He climbed onto to the operating table without fear, smiling all the while....”





Dr. Dance with Concepcion and her family

## Some notes from the journal of Dr. Dave Dance

**May 4, 2012**

Concepcion is an 82 year old that I met yesterday. She came with her son and two daughters. I learned that she has been blind in both eyes for seven years. She is a sweet little old lady with a loving family on whom she has been completely dependent for many years. When I examined her eyes I knew hers would be a particularly challenging case given the hypermature white cataract, the narrow anterior chamber and small pupil in both eyes.

When her son asked me if we could help her, I told him I thought we could, but I gave him a guarded prognosis knowing that the surgery would be difficult. I don't know why she waited this long for surgery, but I was humbled that they chose to have faith in our team to perform her cataract surgery. I recognized early on in her surgery that she had no zonular support for her lens. I knew that it would be difficult to get her lens out and that in attempting to do so we ran the risk of losing the lens to the back of the eye. I was sure that if we got the lens out we would lose vitreous at the very least. Despite the circumstances, we removed the lens and did so without vitreous loss. There are times when as a surgeon I feel heaven's hand assisting in achieving a successful surgical outcome and Concepcion's surgical outcome was one of these miracles. When I removed her patch this morning, the first thing she saw and recognized was the face of her son. He embraced me and cried tears of joy and gratitude and held me for a long time. As I stood there I was overcome with gratitude for the opportunity to be part of that special moment for this family.

There was a sacredness to the moment when Concepcion's son held me in an embrace of profound gratitude that has caused me to reflect. My first impression was one of unease as the recipient of his unrestrained gratitude. As his tears ran down my neck I too was overcome with gratitude--for the opportunity and ability to serve, for the hospital's invitation, for the International Eye Institute for inviting me to be part of this team, for Hospitalito and it's donors and directors, for the nurses and assistants, and for my wife and children supporting me. I have a desire to share this moment with the many people who made it possible. Concepcion may not have many years to live, but living 7 years with preventable blindness is too long, and she will now see for the remainder of her life. To participate in the recovery of her sight was truly a singular experience.

## International Eye Institute

is a non-profit corporation. Our purpose is to provide adult and pediatric eye care and surgery to people of impoverished regions around the globe.

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**EYE ON IT**  
Plans are underway to return to Hospitalito Atitlan in Santiago, Guatemala this Fall. Your support could help us provide much needed services and vision care to the Mayan population living in this region.



### GUATEMALA 2012 TEAM

DR. PAT PARDEN,	TEAM LEADER
DRS. JUSTIN AND MAJ	STORMOGIPSON
MARY SIBULSKY, RN	COORDINATOR
SHASTA LEIGH BELL	MARIE BELL, RN
SOKHEUN CHAU, CST	EVELYN HYMANS
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DR. CHRISTIE BROWN MUNOZ	
DR. ALISON GRANIER	
BARBARA BAKER, RN	
HILLARY CHISHOLM	

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The next day, Teresa and I excitedly hiked up to the hospital and found Manuel in the screening room in a chair ready to be seen. After his eye patch was taken off, we saw that his eyes were perfectly aligned. He smiled again with joy upon hearing how he looked.

If Manuel had been the only general anesthetic I had given the entire two weeks while in Guatemala, I would have been satisfied. I am content with the work that I do in Guatemala not based upon the number of surgeries, but rather the effect we have as a group upon individuals. As Manuel hugged my wife and I goodbye, he walked out of the hospital with Miguel in his arms and an unforgettable smile on his face.

This is why my wife and I come to Guatemala. There is nothing more satisfying to us than serving one of God's precious children. This trip was an honor and a blessing to Teresa and I. We hope to return again soon.

*Editors Note: Mike Oswald works for Anesthesia Associates in Coeur d'Alene. He is an experienced traveler with an extensive Spanish vocabulary and a veteran of many mission trips.*



**IEI NEWSLETTER MAY 2012**



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