

# Shoulder to Shoulder, Inc.

## Spring 2006 Newsletter

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### Santa Lucia

Santa Lucia remains the hub of much activity with our medical and dental brigades. The brigade volunteers are typically very busy at the clinic and at field clinics (clinics set up at remote sites). For those who have never been a part of such an endeavor, we share some of their emergency patient care activity during a typical 12 day tenure: several patients needed machete wound repair/suturing, an infant came in at night with a high fever, an 18 month old child presented in a coma, there was a patient with partial bowel obstruction, a patient in alcoholic coma, and an elderly woman suffering from low blood pressure and loss of consciousness. These trauma patients were sprinkled in among all the other daily patients who also included deliveries of babies, setting of broken limbs, and the ever-important continuity care patient visits (blood pressure monitoring, well child checks, etc.).

As well, brigades typically further medical and public health projects that have been instituted at the clinic. An important project which remains in force is cervical cancer screening. Many Honduran women have not had adequate gynecological care and this project ensures that women have access to this needful screening process which provides follow up for patients with abnormal tests.

Another important project that continues is one that records and tracks access to care for families in this economically depressed area. It monitors factors that inhibit families' inability to receive patient care as well as provides vital information such as ages, number of individuals in the household, relative wealth (e.g. do they own their home or do they own animals for farming or food?). This data is used to anticipate future medical/dental public health needs.

"My experience in Honduras was truly amazing. I have not ever worked in a setting in which there was such a focus on multidisciplinary collaboration between medical professions. I was so impressed with the way in which medicine, nursing, and pharmacy integrated to provide optimal patient care. I was truly touched by the hospitality and graciousness of the Honduran people. In the end I realized I received so much more than I was able to give. I will never forget the experience and I hope to return." *David, Pharm.D., Brigade Member from UC, April 2006*



### Honduras' Future: Children

As with any culture, children are Honduras' future. Shoulder to Shoulder continues to place great emphasis on this segment of society with special programs to nurture them physically and educationally. **The Feeding Program** continues to provide one nutritious meal a day to the needy in the areas surrounding Santa Lucia (and in areas where our partner programs have sites such as San Jose, Yoro). Twenty-two schools and about 1600 children are involved. The food is provided via Shoulder to Shoulder but parents at the schools involved must participate in organizing and preparing the food. For many, this is the only balanced meal the child will receive that day, but data from the project suggest that the program has marked results both from a health/nutrition standpoint and from that of attendance at school. Parents realize the significance of this meal and are keeping their children in school longer than had been typical (at young ages these children are often pulled out of school to tend the field with the father or work in the house with the mother). Many donating to Shoulder to

Shoulder have earmarked their funds to feeding program; if that is you, you can feel pleased to know that you are making tangible changes in children's lives.

One other program that works in tandem with the Feeding Program is the **Yo Puedo (I Can, I Am Able) Program**. This program is geared toward female students but also includes males. The program seeks to develop the self-esteem of high school aged students through the development and continuance of economic development projects (handicrafts, etc.) through their schools. This is a great learning experience for these students. And from these projects, the teachers (who oversee the work) typically are able to identify students who have the academic and leadership qualities to succeed in higher education which is an unattainable

scholastic goal for many Honduran youngsters living in the rural poor areas we serve. Thus was born the **Scholarship Program** which provides the funds for high achieving students to continue their studies past middle school. There are currently 39 students supported by this program with a list of more students awaiting donors.

### **Physician/Staff Spotlight**

An organization can run effectively only with the assistance of dedicated, talented individuals. One such individual for Shoulder to Shoulder is **Dr. Ruben Alfonso Martinez** who is lauded for his medical acumen and for his commitment to the poor in the Santa Lucia area. Dr. Martinez is currently the only physician in the clinic which makes for one very busy doc as witnessed from the experiences of the brigades (above). Ruben, between brigades and physician rotators, has been handling his hectic schedule with aplomb.

Dr. Martinez can also function efficiently due to the addition of a nurse at the clinic. **Sandy Marquez** was born to a family of 12 in Santa Lucia. Sandy was educated in the schools in Santa Lucia, volunteered at times at the clinic and aspired to become a nurse. Donors from the U.S. made it possible for her to attend nursing school in another city in Honduras. She graduated in March and returned to Santa Lucia to work at Clinica Hombro a Hombro. We thank those who donated to make her story one of educational/career choice success!

We also acknowledge **Tanya Rinderknecht, M.P.H.**, who worked tirelessly as a volunteer in Santa Lucia for the past 9 months. During this time, Tanya worked to upgrade many policies and procedures related to our projects in Santa Lucia. Among many things, she very efficiently took our **Scholarship Program** to a new level for which we are appreciative – interviewing teachers and students and completing applications for new students for the program. Tanya will be entering medical school in the Fall, and we wish her very good things.

Big news for our clinic in Santa Lucia is the future of the physician staff there. We have two families who are in the orientation and fundraising phases for transitioning to Santa Lucia as medical missionaries. They are **Dr. Andy & Laura Morris** (Family Medicine resident from Asheville and his wife who is a social worker) and **Drs. James & Christy O’Dea** (previous UC Family Medicine residents) and their 3 children. We are very excited about these physicians and social worker (Laura) who are dedicating themselves to 2 years of the provision of healthcare and other relevant services to this rural, impoverished area in Honduras. More to come on this.

### **New Partner Program**

Thundermist Healthcare from Woonsocket, RI, is our newest partner program in Honduras. They have accompanied other brigades to Honduras for initial site assessments and have determined to remain in Los Pinares, which is a community without electricity and without a passable road running to it off the main road that leads to Santa Lucia. The area has never been serviced by physicians and is too far from Santa Lucia for our brigades to do day-long field clinics there. Maria Montanaro, CEO of Thundermist, has spearheaded this effort. A team went in March and cleared the area for the clinic, working shoulder to shoulder with their Honduran counterparts, and construction of a clinic has begun. It is an exciting time for this community and for this partner program as they work together to achieve a common goal of access to healthcare for this village and surrounding catchment area.

### **Dental Focus**

The dental team accomplished several important goals on the recent brigade. The first was to conduct a baseline study on school children in the Los Pinares community which is about 2 hours from Santa Lucia. This community will be served in the near future by the clinic being built by Thundermist (above). In the baseline study documentation was made of the oral conditions of 125 children, recording the number of decayed and missing teeth, along with other parameters. None of the children had ever been to a dentist before. The second accomplishment was to teach the dentist onsite at the clinic in Santa Lucia how to use equipment and materials for doing root canals on front teeth. These were undoubtedly the first root canals ever done in the area, and it is our hope that with this treatment we can spare many of the young people from losing their front teeth.

**You can find more information about Shoulder to Shoulder at:  
[www.shouldertoshoulder.org](http://www.shouldertoshoulder.org) or at phone: 513-721-2221, x10**