

Obtaining Medical Aid Not Always Easy

The early bird gets the worm – Even in Honduras! It's 5:00 am and people are starting to line up outside the clinic because they know that it is first come, first served. It is a "gringo" clinic so people assume it's good. Our administrative aide, Heydy, does the initial screening and triage on patients. She and Dr. Alvarado have an idea of who is a local resident (or known to others in the area) and who can pay. Their awareness of group dynamics and individual behavioral traits have enabled them to refuse service to patients they know are not indigent. Manos Amigas is trying to make the clinic and its mission known to local leaders and that was the reason for calling a "town meeting" with the barrio leaders as they could assist with economic screening.

Just like in the USA, nurses in Honduras are scarce. They want to work in the big city, so their availability in communities like La Entrada is sparse at best. As soon as we can locate a nurse with the appropriate credentials and experience (it should be just a matter of time), Manos Amigas will add one to the staff. Staffing is likely to be an ongoing issue in the short-term as we recruit and as the Manos Amigas volunteers define their own roles relative to the clinic.

We were fortunate to locate Heydy and in turn Heydy is thrilled to have a job in her home community. Fortunately for us, she had learned English in school and is skilled on the computer. Formerly, she was a courier, having to travel by motorcycle on remote roads to deliver messages and parcels. Because she is supporting her two young sons, she had to limit her travel to three hours in each direction so that she would be home by nightfall. Our presence in the area along with our need of the right skills has proven to be a transformational situation for us all.

In our own small way, we have brought job creation to the attention of the local residents as one of the benefits of the clinic's presence in the community. As the clinic grows and other supportive healthcare services units or new business are looking to establish a presence in a growing crossroads community, where ancillary services are available, a pool of trained professionals, technical specialists and support staff will be required.

The economic impact of our clinic on doctor's and pharmacists in the town is unknown at the moment, but we are aware that it has become a topic of local conversation. Some drugs we've sent are not available in the local pharmacies which could exacerbate the issues, especially since "our patients" will get the "latest and greatest" pharmaceutical products for little to no charge. It is wonderful to see the results and efforts of our benefactors at work in a place of unimaginable poverty.

