

The Gift of Sound

Christmas is the season of giving and some people received a miraculous gift - the gift of sound! Thanks goes to the Starkey Foundation for providing the hearing aids that these people received. There were tears of joy and yes, even some tears of sadness from those who were not so fortunate.

There were 70 patients from the Manos Amigas Clinic (MA), one of the largest assemblages of people in the country who registered for the program, but unfortunately, not all of them were the recipients of the gift. Most likely they will have to wait until next year – or at the very least towards the end of 2008. Through no fault of their own, these people suffered the misfortune of being poor and unable to satisfy all of the program requirements in a timely manner. Lacking an audiologist at the MA clinic, the Board of Directors arranged to pay for a visiting technician who tested the patient's hearing on several occasions, took ear impressions and compiled the results. The results were held until mid November and the technician being unfamiliar with the US holiday of Thanksgiving, shipped the impressions, but they did not reach the States in time for the hearing aids to be set up for patients before the Starkey Brigade left for Honduras. Consequently, only 34 people, the lucky ones, received the hearing devices.

MA chartered a bus to take clinic patients on the three hour ride from La Entrada to the hotel in San Pedro Sula where the Starkey fittings took place. The bus left at 4:00 am so that these people would have the entire day if necessary to be fitted with the appropriate hearing aid.



Patients wait patiently on hotel grounds to be called into the clinic to be fitted with a hearing aid

Printed below is a letter from Dr. Sonia Bustamante, immediate past president of Manos Amigas, who accompanied the group and shared some of her experiences with us.

“Hello Bob and Mike. Yesterday was a wonderful day. I traveled with the group of patients to San Pedro Sula to the Copantl Hotel. It is not easy for me to explain the feeling one person could sense sharing that day with that group of people. They were waiting a long time for that opportunity. It was a wonderful chance for me, too, to go into their lives one day and to be a witness of their happiness. They expressed to me their thanks and gratitude to have the mercy from God. As you know, that was an intense experience. Two of them cried and gave to me a hug. Well, one day I will express to you this experience with all the words we will need. Finally, we should tell you thanks a lot on behalf of the 34 patients of our community who have the chance for a better life from now on.

Have a good day and God bless you and your families forever.”

Sonia



Waiting with anticipation



Name is called and patient proceeds to registration

Starkey recently announced that they will continue the Gift of Sound Program for 2008, but will return to the country when they have 1,000 patients registered for the program. This means that MA already has 36 patients on the list with ear impressions waiting for the return visit. To prevent a reoccurrence of events from last year, Serving at the Crossroads is training one of its Board members, a nurse, to administer the testing and to train a MA staff member at the clinic to conduct hearing tests on the new patients.

The Monday Morning Circle of Westminster Presbyterian Church in West Chester, PA is supporting the hearing aid project by collecting batteries and money to keep the hearing aids operating. Serving at the Crossroads is grateful for their support in this mission.