



Partnering With Geisinger Medical Center for Special Case Patient *Youngster to undergo brain surgery*

December is an exciting time of year filled with special events, gift giving and celebrating the day when a special child was born. Serving at the Crossroads is celebrating the arrival of a special child too. Her name is Heysi. She is a three-year old child born in Honduras with a cranial anomaly that has developed into an encephalocele. This rare condition, where the bones of the skull don't completely close and brain tissue and cerebral spinal tissue protrude, cause a swelling under the skin. Left untreated, among other problems, pressure on the optic nerve can cause blindness. Surgery for this serious condition is not available for Heysi in Honduras.

We are thankful and excited to celebrate the goodness of people. Because of the hard work, cooperation and compassion of a number of people from Serving at the Crossroads (SATC), Manos Amigas Clinic (MA) and Geisinger Medical Center, Heysi accompanied by her mother, Karla, arrived in Philadelphia last Friday, enroute to



Geisinger's Janet Weis Children's Hospital in Danville, PA where she will undergo corrective surgery. Arrangements had been underway since August, when a medical team from Geisinger, working at the Manos Amigas Clinic first met Heysi. Her pathway to the US has been arduous, with many hurdles along the way requiring interviews, meetings, letters and phone calls to obtain documentation, administrative approvals and medical skill sets to enable this surgery to take place. Just like in Bethlehem, a long time ago, help from others, timing and perseverance are central to the event about to take place.

Heysi's journey started in a community in southwestern Honduras about 40 minutes by car from our clinic. Along with her mother, she made the 2.5 hour trip across the mountains to San Pedro Sula where the airport is located. Since road conditions are unpredictable and dangers lurk along the way in the evening hours, it was necessary to arrive there in daylight and spend time with family friends nearby, so that she could board the early morning flight to the States.

Welcome to the USA - for a few weeks at least

With assistance and tickets provided by American Airlines, they experienced their first airplane ride, arriving in Miami and processing through immigration and customs, prior

to locating their next gate and continuing on to Philly. Heysi and Karla arrived tired, but safely in Philadelphia.

They were greeted by Bob Sumner and Pete Thompson from the SATC Board and one of the nurses, Dorothy from Geisinger's medical center, came down to take them to her family's home in the area. In the morning they would depart together on the four-hour trip to Danville, PA. Dorothy is outgoing, speaks Spanish well and has been to the MA clinic several times. We had coats and lots of warm clothing for them as the weather turned cold this week here and in Danville. Coming from a tropical country, they surely would not have a suitable wardrobe for our conditions. Heysi was given a couple of stuffed bears to take with her and she was not about to part with them!

What goes on in this strange place?

Dorothy let them sleep-in a few extra hours. Filled with wonder and excitement about their new surroundings, Heysi and her mother, Karla, happily put on their new outfits in the morning. Dorothy felt that Karla must have been cold as she slept in her new sweats under a pile of blankets. Upon arrival at the medical center, Dorothy signed them into Ronald McDonald House where they were assigned an apartment. She saw that plenty of food was already stocked in their kitchen. Since neither mother nor child understand English, reading labels would be next to impossible, so Dorothy emptied foods into Tupperware containers so they could see what was inside.

She showed them how to use the microwave....can you imagine what Karla must be thinking about her new surroundings? Coming from a rural village where there is electricity, she still cooks outside over an open flame! An now she is confronted with a "magical box" where you push a button, the turntable hums, in a minute or two a bell rings and out comes hot food! Dorothy plans to be at the apartment everyday for their meals. Heysi was intrigued too ... as a typical 3 yr-old, she was busy exploring the things in the apartment asking what's this and this and that?

Angels abound

You might be interested in knowing that Dorothy was one of the nurses, who a year ago, when we had a major snowstorm in Pennsylvania, stopping all flights out of Philadelphia, drove 12-hours to Atlanta to board a plane for Honduras. Upon arrival she and two other nurses spent the night sleeping on a bench at the airport in San Pedro Sula until we could get ground transportation for them the following morning....and then when getting into La Entrada, they showered and immediately went to work at the clinic. Dorothy is an angel. She typically keeps foreign patients in her house in Danville that are recovering from surgery, but a few months ago, her house was flooded by the devastating storm that hit the area and now she is struggling with the meager insurance payout to rebuild the entire first floor of her house.

Heysi has a day or two to acclimate, before undergoing imaging scans and meeting her team of doctors for the first time. Her surgery is scheduled for later this week.

We ask for your prayers for this mother and child. The best present we can offer them this season is a comfortable place to stay, a dedicated team of physicians, devoted caregivers and a successful surgical procedure in a place that is generous and welcoming for patients and guests.