

A newsletter providing information on activities designed to help alleviate the pain and suffering of the people in La Entrada de Copan, Honduras  
Published by Serving At The Crossroads, a 501 (c) (3) corporation providing dental and medical assistance for the impoverished in Honduras

## Project Honduras

Representatives from SATC and Manos Amigas attended the fifth annual Project Honduras Conference in Copan Ruinas in late October. This conference brought together the various missionary groups and organizations from around the world who come into



Honduras to work for the improvement of that nation and its people. This year, approximately 185 attendees, representing hospitals, universities, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), churches, individuals and philanthropic groups participated in the conference. As one of the leaders of the conference said, "The activities carried out by the various groups represent ongoing projects in nation building." The local newspaper reported "It is their spirit of generosity which drives many of these groups into the jungles of Honduras in search of the sick throughout our country and we have always felt their warmth and enthusiasm as they implement their programs."

Mike Tysowsky from SATC participated in a panel discussion and presented a paper entitled "Who Are We and What Do We Bring to the Table?" While most of the visiting groups described what they were doing for the Hondurans, Mike introduced the five representatives from Manos Amigas - all of whom work at our clinic and took time on Saturday, their day off, to come to the conference so that the participants could meet and hear first-hand how they were empowered to help their own people. They were enthusiastically received and given a standing ovation by the conference attendees. See *PROJECT HONDURAS* page 3

## Clinic Update

- ◆ Over 8,000 people treated
- ◆ New shelving and storage facilities have been added to the pharmacy area
- ◆ A concrete sidewalk has been installed
- ◆ A covered outdoor waiting area, sheltering patients from the hot sun has been completed
- ◆ 1,800 pounds of pharmaceuticals and supplies shipped in December



## Save the Date!

Thursday, May 4, 2006  
4:30pm - 8:30pm

Art Show  
with works by Linda Luke

at  
Pace 1 Restaurant and Country Inn  
341 Thornton Rd  
Thornton, PA 15074

Linda Luke is a nationally recognized Pennsylvania artist whose works represent the scenic countryside and natural landscapes of her native state. Using a unique and realistic style, she has captured the attention of private and public collectors, art galleries, and corporations here and abroad. Her watercolor and oil paintings reflect scenes of lush landscapes participating in the rituals of the changing seasons.

Each painting is a celebration of nature, allowing the world's beauty to reach the viewer undisturbed, giving witness to the transcendent powers of ordinary things, and evoking a memory of timeless beauty.

## President's Message



*With each trip we continue to learn more about the people and their culture. We also see quick trans-*

*formations taking place in various communities. And most importantly, SATC has become a partner in this transformational development. The malnourished children at our clinic are being attended to, senior citizens who struggle to walk are given modern aids and continuing healthcare education is provided for patients to make better informed decisions.*

*We thought that hurricane Katrina would slow down the level of giving for the foreseeable future, but that does not seem to be the case as missionary groups continue to flow into the country with dollars and equipment. Because of this influx of goods, the Honduran government is stepping in to impound some shipments and to slow the flow of donated supplies into the country. Consequently, they have added another level of bureaucracy to the mix, which slows down the process of attending to the hungry and preventing illness.*

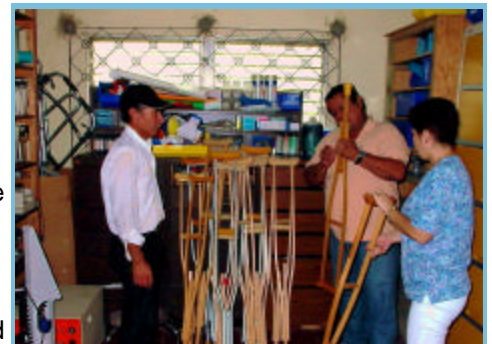
*We continue to collect pharmaceutical samples and to look for relationships with manufacturers and others who can help us acquire a reliable, steady stream of medications for shipment to our clinic. As you know, purchasing medications is expensive and is our option of last resort. If you are in a position either through personal donations, working relationships or other spheres of influence, to help us with this effort please contact me or one of our board members. We most need antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, and antifungals.*

## Making a Difference . . . Yet So Much More To Do

### Helping People Walk

An elderly gentleman on crutches made his way to see one of the physicians. Hunched over and helped by his wife, he struggled to walk along dirt and rocky pathways to reach our clinic. Other than major highways and some shopping districts, most pathways are not paved. This presents special challenges to those on crutches or in wheelchairs.

Our patient came in with a crude, well-worn pair of crutches. Actually he was one of the fortunate ones who had a walking device. However, the crutches were causing him pain because they were much too short, forcing him to lean far forward and throwing his back out of alignment. Fortunately, our clinic is well supplied and Dr. Obed was able to select a lightweight set of adjustable aluminum crutches that he fitted to an appropriate height for the patient and topped them off with rubber shoulder shock absorbers for added comfort. Sporting wide smiles and tear-filled sparkling eyes, it was obvious the patient and his wife were ecstatic. Both hugged everyone working at the clinic and departed arm in arm for their barrio.



### Serving the Hungry

Another patient at the clinic walked for two days across the mountainside carrying her child who was in need of attention. The girl was 16 months old and suffered from severe malnutrition - she weighed only 13 pounds. Dr. Alverado gave her orange juice, some vitamins and a small supply of canned baby formula. This family had no money for transportation and probably little more than the clothes on their backs. The mother saw the collection of stuffed toy animals in the doctor's office that had been provided by Hearts for Honduras missionaries last summer and asked if she could have one of them for her child. The clinic staff was more than happy to provide a toy for this young patient.

Lack of food and addressing nutrition are common problems in Honduras. Recognizing the prevailing circumstances in La Entrada and throughout much of the Copan region, the clinic staff are well aware that the service provided to the mother and child are just stop gap measures that last for only a few days. There is no opportunity for an assessment of neurological development and if there were, there is no immediate hope that anything could be done to remedy the situation. This scene will replay itself multiple times during the coming months, with only the names of the characters changing.

## Honduran Doctors Providing Health Care

Although the covered outdoor waiting area was intended to keep people out of the roadway and to be used as a triage area, it also serves as a public health instructional area. Daily, Dr. Jesus Debon, a clinic volunteer, holds seminars and teaches visiting patients about health care practices, diseases and environmental conditions that can impact their well-being. Although the patients are eager to learn from him, as evidenced by the question and answer sessions, old habits are hard to break. Unaccustomed to the new amenities and procedures, many patients prefer to jockey for position at the head of the line, fearing that if they are in the waiting area adjacent to the clinic they will be forgotten by the doctor.



The Manos Amigas clinic is referred to as the "Gringo Clinic" meaning that medicines present. Implied with that title is the misconception that "gringo physicians" with their instruments and medicines are better practitioners of medicine than local doctors. Patients would rather be treated by foreign doctors.



We have seen that the Honduran doctor is every bit as capable as the visiting doctor; he knows the local circumstances and diseases, but simply lacks adequate resources. The model SATC follows is to provide the local participating physician with the diagnostic equipment and tools and to build up the persona of the physician so as to bolster the confidence of patients in their community healthcare professional. Honduran doctors, not American doctors administer the medications and instruct the patients.

Word on the street is that gringos are building a new hospital in the community. The truth of the matter is that we plan to build a new, modern clinic, but it will not be a hospital. There are a myriad of excruciating, bureaucratic requirements - medical, environmental and governmental regulations and as we are earning, the wheels of bureaucracy grind ever so slowly! Perhaps it is merely semantics? To the typical person who has no "medico," and traverses the rails and pathways of La Entrada to seek medical help, any place that eases the pain, puts on splints, sutures wounds and provides bandages, crutches or wheelchairs is viewed as a hospital.

## Habitat for Humanity Partners With Serving at the Crossroads

Habitat for Humanity of Chester County, PA has committed to provide an annual grant to help build housing in La Entrada. They will set up a program to build several houses for the needy in designated barrios.

## Dr. Alverado Presents at Convention

*PROJECT HONDURAS*, from page 1

Dr. Carlos Alverado from our clinic gave a very impressive presentation describing clinic procedures and the concept of



volunteerism that has begun to take place. He described the illnesses encountered, summarized the 730 cases seen at the clinic last month, presented data to back up his examples and showed pictures of some of the conditions encountered in the various barrios around La Entrada.

He pointed out that Manos Amigas had started on the road to sustainability with the collection and banking of modest service fees from those in the community who were able to pay for their healthcare. These fees will be used to purchase medications required by those who lack financial resources.

On the opening day of the conference, the attendees witnessed a remarkable sight.



As the general session got underway, a couple of residents from the community excitedly barged into the room asking if there were any "medicos." A buddy of theirs had been in great agony for days

having broken his arm and dislocated his shoulder after falling down a flight of steps. Six doctors ran from the room and attended to the needs of their friend. The doctors tied a sheet on the arm of the man, pulled it forward to reset the arm in the shoulder socket and then attended to the broken bone with a rubberized splint.

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## How can you help?

Serving At The Crossroads is a not-for profit corporation and donations are tax deductible. Monetary contributions, cases of pharmaceuticals, or equipment and services from physicians, dentists and other healthcare professionals are always appreciated. Donations of any size will help.

## Contact

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## A Girl with a Burn . . . A Case History

by Dr. R.B Beckmann

*We walked far up the dirt trail into the barrio to a dirt floored house filled with men, women and hungry children - all without access to health care.*

*We came to see a girl with a bad burn. She had a bad burn indeed! A bucket of water heating on the open wood stove in their hut had overturned, scalding her leg. Her mother had taken good care of the burn with water and bandages, kept as clean as she could make them. What was left was consistent with third degree burns, healing quite well, although the scar would be substantial.*

*As we examined her and talked to her mother, we noticed her big belly was not in proportion to the rest of her slim build. When we asked the girl - she told us, "it has been growing" and then she added shyly, "and you know, sometimes I feel things crawling in my tummy."*

*She was right - she was full of worms. And, guess what? So were all her brothers and sisters!*

*Can you help?*

*\$10 buys worm medicine for this girl, or one of her sisters or brothers, for a year*

*\$200 provides medicine for her family for a year as well as replacement of the cooking area and cleaning supplies, ridding them of parasites*

*\$500 purchases slides and reagents to examine stool specimens for parasites - enough for a 1,000 children*

*\$3,000 buys a dual head microscope and light source enabling the examination of fecal, urine, blood, and other samples such as scrapings from skin sores*

*We have so much! They have so little! Won't you help?*

*Pledge form available on our website: [www.servingatthecrossroads.org](http://www.servingatthecrossroads.org)*



## About the Author

**Charles R.B. Beckmann, MD, FACOG** is Director of Academic Affairs and Ambulatory Services and Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Albert Einstein Medical Center and Thomas Jefferson University. His interests include primary women's health care, medical and health professions education, and medical informatics. R.B. is the author of one of the major textbooks on obstetrics and gynecology used in medical schools today.

