

Project Honduras – Assembling the Bricks and Mortar for Nation Building

If, as generally acknowledged, an army travels on its stomach, we can say that nations are built by linking a solid foundation with the laying of one building block at a time. Project Honduras is just one example of “volunteerism” or the foundation supporting the bricks and mortar required to build a nation. Representatives from SATC and *Manos Amigas* attended the fifth ***Annual Project Honduras Conference*** in Copan Ruinas in late October, 2005.

This conference brought together the various missionary groups and organizations from around the world, who come into the country 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 that “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.



Manos Amigas and SATC Conference Attendees

Left to right -- Alba Santos, Heydy Rivera, Dr. Marleni Valle (back row) Dr. Obed Rivera, Paul Larson, Mike Tysowsky, Bob Sumner, Dr. Carlos Alverado

Dr. Alverado's Presentation

Dr. Carlos Alverado from our clinic presented a very impressive paper and Power Point Presentation describing the concept of volunteerism that has begun to take place and clinic procedures. He described the illness 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 would then be used to purchase medications required by those who did not have the ability to pay.

Excitement Honduran Style!

On the opening day of the Project Honduras Conference, the attendees witnessed a remarkable site. As the general session got underway, a couple of residents from the host community excitedly barged into the room asking if there were any "medicos" here as a physician was badly needed for a buddy who was in great agony and suffering with pain for days. About six doctors ran from the room and attended to the needs of their buddy. It seems that this man had been drinking and now sober, was feeling the pain from a broken arm and dislocated shoulder after having fallen down a flight of stone



steps five days ago. Upon examining the patient, 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. As rudimentary as this might seem, the patient with arm in sling and a smile on his face, was back at the front door of the conference center the next morning, thanking the doctors who had treated him and alleviated his pain. Falling down a flight of steps is not an uncommon event, but the availability of professional treatment, splinting and resetting bones is!