AHUAS CLINIC CONTINUES TO SAVE LIVES

After more than 72 years, the Clinica Evangélica Morava in Ahuas, Honduras continues to provide Christian medical care to the needy and marginalized population. This is possible with the prayers, financial contributions, and volunteer visits of many North Americans. It survives with God’s guidance in the face of many challenges. We are thankful for God’s presence as we continue to feed malnourished children, save the lives of patients with nowhere else to turn, complete capital improvements, purchase new equipment, and win souls for the Lamb.

During the first nine months of 2018, we attended to 146 births, performed 184 surgeries, admitted 617 patients, saw 2,573 outpatients, did 408 ultrasounds, conducted 3,690lab exams, and took 219X-rays. In addition, we fed an average of about 100 malnourished children six days a week at our three Infant Feeding Program sites. Work crews from Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina have served this year at the Clinic. We have had other consultants and visitors as well. Several employees were laid off in early 2018 because of financial shortfalls. Several construction and maintenance projects were completed this year.

Our primary concern and the focus of all our efforts is the patients who come seeking medical assistance. Earlier this month, a mother traveled upriver from her village at the mouth of the Patauco River. Her week-old child suffered from a life threatening congenital defect that required attention by a pediatric surgeon. The Moravian Hospital was able to provide transportation to Puerto Lempira where the Honduran Air Force agreed to take her to Tegucigalpa. How she and her mom will cover medical, food, and lodging expenses or the return trip to Barra Patauco is unclear. Please keep mother and daughter in your prayers.

In August, a pregnant woman had undergone an emergency cesarean at the Clinic when heart sounds were detected for only one of two fetuses. The mother and one premature baby were saved, but the other child was stillborn. The Moravian Hospital provided transportation to Puerto Lempira for the surviving girl for treatment. Dr. Ratli visited the patient following her return and was concerned both with the little girl’s lack of weight gain and also by the poverty and overcrowding that he found in the child’s home. We are thankful for North Carolina supporters who are actively raising funds to cover the cost of an incubator for such cases.

We are privileged to have two Miskito doctors working at the Clinic, Dr. Kenneth Serapio and Dr. Ratli Bendles. Dr. Kenneth, a Nicaraguan Miskito surgeon, hopes to retire in Raiti on the Rio Coco the end of March or April, 2019. Dr. Ratli expects to leave Ahuas and begin his new work early in 2019 in Puerto Lempira. The Honduran Medical Board has not yet found suitable replacements for either of them. Pray God will send qualified physicians to address critical medical needs here.

The Infant Feeding Program continues to provide nourishing meals to about 100 malnourished children under 5 years of age in Ahuas, Krupunta, and Barra Patauco. The New Era Reformed Church in Michigan provided funds for a new galera, or shelter, for meal distribution in Krupunta, with another one to be completed in Barra Patauco by late January.
Wanting to address this complex set of barriers to healthy living, we started the Infant Feeding Program mentioned above. Providing a daily nutritious meal to young children clearly helps to improve both their present health and also their chances for normal physical and mental development. However, it does little to address the underlying causes of malnutrition: deficient diet; limited access to potable drinking water; absence of latrines; and lack of income. It was in this context that we first created the Women’s Agricultural Project in 2017.

The women participants in the project are supposed to donate two hours to either the garden or the egg laying project each week. In return, their children receive a nutritious meal and the mothers learn how to cultivate and care for vegetables and produce eggs. The Women’s Agricultural Project shows the women how to plant and care for their important vegetable crops and provides them with seeds so that they can better feed their families (and possibly sell surplus produce in the community).

With income from the sale of vegetables and eggs, small loans will be made to the women so that they can create their own income generating projects. The first two loans were made in October, possibly for sewing, vegetable growing, gasoline sales, or others. The loans need to be repaid to allow others to receive future loans.

Individuals in Door County have shipped medical supplies to Illinois. Dr. Ratli in Honduras has ordered 10,000 pounds of medical supplies for a 40-foot container we plan to ship. Assistance from DOLE/Standard Fruit in La Ceiba and HANES in NC has been requested to help with ocean freight. With God’s help, we will be able to ship them to Ahuas in late February.

The Women’s Sewing Group from Ahuas and Papatlaya have been sewing, knitting, and embroidering craft items for sale in both Honduras and North America. Churches and individuals in the US have helped provide machines and materials for the project.

The new lab was completed earlier this year with generous donations from NC Moravians and others. Two lab technicians moved into the structure on October 15th. The building consists of a main lab and two smaller rooms – a “blood bank” for donations of blood and an area for taking specimens for lab exams. The flat concrete roof will eventually become the floor of a second story guest house to replace the 30-year-old (+) visitors’ quarters above the operating room.

With financial gifts from ND Moravians, we purchased a new John Deere Series 5E tractor and loader. After waiting 6 months, the John Deere representative in San Pedro Sula notified us that he had received the Government-sealed document indicating that we had been awarded the tax exemption. A loader, provided by generous North Dakotans, has been installed.

I will be returning to San Pedro Sula on 12/27/2018. After other travels, I will return to San Pedro and finalize arrangements for shipping the tractor to Ahuas. After 6 months of worry, I am reminded of Paul’s admonition “to be anxious for nothing.”

Several work crews have been confirmed for Ahuas in 2019. If you feel called to help with construction, maintenance, IT, or medical crews in Ahuas, let me know and we can discuss a possible visit. RThorne2003@yahoo.com. If you would like to donate to help with items needed at the Ahuas Clinic, please e-mail me for a list of suggested items.

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