



GUATEMALA VILLAGE HEALTH

*Improving lives through
sustainable healthcare in rural
Guatemala - One village at a time.*

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BIENVENIDOS (Welcome)!

Greetings and welcome to the September 2014 issue of the Guatemala Village Health (GVH) newsletter. We hope you will enjoy the news and other information we share with you. We welcome your comments.

Our next trip takes place **February 7-21, 2015**. Remember, all the necessary paperwork and information is on our website, www.guatemalavillagehealth.org. Trip information, airline information, vaccination information and the Team Handbook are all readily available. Jennifer Hoock, MD, MPH will be the team lead for this trip. We hope you will join us.

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Summer Trip: Jul 25-Aug 8

\$18,000 RAISED AT MAY FUNDRAISER

by Teresa Bess

It is with heartfelt thanks and much gratitude that we at GVH recognize everyone who participated in the May 2014 fundraiser. With your help Guatemala Village Health raised \$18,000 to help continue our programs! Muchas gracias for your generosity from the GVH Board, staff, volunteers, and from our villagers in Guatemala! You are all amazing and we could not have done it without you!

**SAVE THE DATE:
2015 GVH Dinner
Saturday March 28th**

JORNADA 2014

Our "jornada" this summer set out with all the enthusiasm of youth (given that the vast majority of our team was under 25), and the belief that our senior members could share some wisdom and experience. We traveled first to our villages in the mountains above Lago Izabal – starting in Chinabenne, our most remote village, where we began installation of our first "hortaliza" described by one team member as a crop field rather than a garden. This is the beginning of the pilot "Gardens for Food" project supported by the "Fund a Need" at our annual fundraising dinner in May.

(Note: Read more about the Chinabeque garden venture in Carri Singer's article on page 2.)

To complete our first 24 hours (the most adventurous part of the trip), we set up camp for the night in the village with a combination of cots, hammocks, sleeping pads and traditional beds, fortunately all inside, as the rains came in for the night. (continued on page 4)



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NEW OFFICE

by Teresa Bess

GVH invites you to visit our new office space in the Rainier Center, 1265 S Main Street, Suite 303-C, Seattle WA 98144. Parking is free and we would love to have you drop by for a tour.



GARDEN PROJECT

by Carri Singer

Three gardens were planned for this trip—Chinabenque, Grand Plan Tatin, and Monterrico. When we arrived in Chinabenque, the garden site had been cleared on a steep hillside near the living quarters of the lead village family. About 10 village men helped till, fence and plant. There were several flats of cucumbers and peppers that had been started for transplanting. By the time we left there were 5 rows, 4 feet wide and perhaps 30 feet long that had been planted on one side.

Nine families from all parts of the community – the Catholic church, the Cocode (local government), the school, the Evangelical church, etc. will participate; each tending their portion of the plot where they will grow radishes, spinach/kale, peppers, tomatoes and other local vegetables. Our funding will provide support in terms of tools, fencing, seed, natural pesticides, organic fertilizers, assistance with irrigation and knowledge about farming. The villagers will tend the plants and become local experts so that they can teach others. This project serves as the sustainability plan for our current grant-supported projects that provide micronutrient supplements as the vegetables will provide sources of iron, folate, zinc, and numerous other vitamins lacking in the traditional diet.

On another positive note . . . while in Rio Banco, we chatted with a gentleman who has experience with farming who said he is willing to help villagers start other vegetable plots. It seemed to me that he would be a great resource in Guatemala for this and other garden projects.



On this trip we learned about village politics and soil differences among other things, but we came away with many ideas about garden prep, tools, and the best time of the year for planting. In our view, the effort was a success. Many thanks to all who participated!

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UPDATE: MICRONUTRIENT PROJECTS

by Jennifer Hoock

Our micronutrient projects are designed to bridge communities from their current state of poor nutrition to a sustainable level of improved health through dietary improvements. "Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies," sponsored by our local Mill Creek Rotary through an International Project Grant, provides supplements to over 2000 women of childbearing age in 16 villages with the goal of reducing the risk of spina bifida in newborns, and preventing anemia, reducing the risk of death from post delivery bleeding for mothers. These supplements are delivered in conjunction with an educational program in nutrition which includes "charlas" (brief educational talks) and "cooking demonstrations" every 6 weeks by our in country staff – Juanita and Vladimir. Our second grantor, Vitamin Angels, provides prenatal and children's vitamins (6 months to 5 years) along with albendazole and vitamin A



In July we received a generous donation of childrens prenatal vitamins from Vitamin Angels

administered every 6 months for our parasite prevention program. Educational sessions teach parents and children the importance of wearing shoes and washing hands to decrease the burden of infection. Both projects are working well and growing.

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MISSION: Improve the health, education and economic prosperity of rural villages in Guatemala.

We are a group of health workers, engineers, teachers, administrators, college students and kids, working to help improve the health of a group of villages in the Rio Dulce and Monte Rico areas of Guatemala. We are a 501c3 organization based in Seattle, Washington. Visit us at Guatemalavillagehealth.org

GVH DENTAL HYGIENE PROGRAM

by Diana Orellana & Teresa Bess

Diana Orellana beams when she talks about the village children and the enthusiasm, growth and initiative they have shown for the GVH dental hygiene program. Diana is a dental assistant residing in Seattle who learned about and became involved with GVH by a quirk of fate. A patient, Alice Lobenstein, was curious about the x-ray equipment being used during her procedure and the ensuing conversation between dentist and Alice led to the dentist introducing Alice to Diana and it was a liaison made in heaven. Diana was already scheduled to visit her family in Guatemala in the summer of 2010 which coincided with Alice' trip to Guatemala! Plans and the appropriate GVH introductions were made, and later that first summer Diana found herself volunteering as an interpreter between villagers and the GVH healthcare workers who traveled that year. The experience was so fulfilling for both Diana and the GVH team that Diana decided to volunteer the next year as an interpreter. The rest is history.

On her second trip Diana not only acted as an interpreter but she also became interested in the GVH dental program that had been started by Pamela Curry in 2012. The team distributed toothbrushes, toothpaste and lessons on how to brush at each of the villages they visited. Diana is now a co-leader in the dental hygiene program, meeting and educating the principals, teachers and children at each village.

The program has grown from fluoride application and distribution of toothbrushes to include educational sessions teaching the importance of dental hygiene and how it affects overall health. Discussions on the connection between proper nutrition and the importance of having clean drinking water in addition to demonstrations and educational materials for dental and general health are all part of the program. In the beginning Diana was amazed at the lack of knowledge about dental health among the villagers but soon learned that neither village leaders nor parents understood the importance of dental health because they had never been taught. Even with exposure to dental hygiene, there is no money to buy toothbrushes or toothpaste. Over time Diana realized the key to success—was the children themselves ... “When teaching about dental health, keep it short and simple. Get the children interested and they run home to enthusiastically share what they learn.” Diana’s teaching focuses on



Diana (in visor) leads a dental hygiene session

the importance of good eating habits and she frequently names foods readily available to villages explaining why they are good for the body, i.e., avocado has vitamins for your brain; radishes are good for blood, bananas are full of potassium, good for teeth and blood etc. “Suero” stations are set up to demonstrate water purification and that salt and lime or other fruits make healthy drinks that helps prevent dehydration. She emphasizes that Coke does not prevent dehydration and is full of sugar and other unhealthy ingredients. This cross-teaching instructs villagers on ways good nutrition, clean water and keeping teeth and mouth healthy are all important for living a healthier, longer life. The children are loving it and improvements are amazingly observable after 2 years. Keep up the good work Diana! This is what GVH is all about.

Donate to GVH using Amazon Smiles – Just visit www.amazon.com and search for SMILES. Sign up for Guatemala Village Health. Be sure to bookmark Amazon Smiles in your browser so we get credit!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Join us and work for a cause, not for applause. Call 206-339-3352 or go to the GVH website, www.guatemalavillagehealth.org to find out more about our rewarding and exciting volunteer opportunities. Donations by cash or check are welcome or donate online at our website. Gracias!

JORNADA 2014

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We traveled back toward civilization spending a day in Marcajan to provide more clinical care through triage to group visits followed by individual consultations with the doctor as needed, screening labs and blood pressures, and follow-up for the patients with diabetes and hypertension in our Chronic Disease Management Program run by Juanita, our in-country nurse. For the children, we checked in on our now well-established dental program where the kids happily showed us how they brushed their teeth and had become master “swish and spitters” with their weekly fluoride treatment. (Read more on page 3.) We continued our work in checking heights and weights to screen for malnutrition, and began distributing vitamins as the precursor to a program in macronutrient/nutritional supplements that we hope to begin piloting in February 2015.

Gil Mazurik performed the first surgery of the trip by removing a large bothersome cyst (present since birth) from the forehead of a very grateful man who had traveled an hour from Chinachabilchoch, a new village that is requesting our help.

She was assisted by a most wonderful Guatemalan doctor, Teresa Upun, who joined us for 3 days to help out and learn what we do as she runs a similar program in another part of Guatemala. She has since signed on to work with us more long-term by providing support to our nurse in managing our health programs.

To round out our activities, we ran “women’s groups” in each of the villages that we visited as part of our third grant project “Empowering Women to Access Contraception” - we placed 14 IUDs this trip - funded by the Seattle International Foundation.



Through “Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP)” workshops which build self-esteem and community while teaching conflict resolution skills, we will continue to work on the issue of domestic violence. In September our in-country staff and volunteers completed their training to become AVP facilitators and in November the first training sessions were completed with the teachers from schools in each of our villages.

It is my ongoing belief that we are all born onto this earth with an equal right to freedom, health and the pursuit of happiness, thus we join together in GVH to do our small part to move the world toward a this ideal.

Hope you will join us here in Seattle or on our next trip in February 2015.

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Did you know? Guatemala is one of the world’s most linguistically diverse nations. Although Spanish is the official national language, about 40% of the people speak indigenous languages as a first language. The country has 23 languages that are officially recognized, nearly all of them of Mayan origin. Three of them, K’iche’, Q’echi’, and Mam have been given status as languages of statutory national identity. (Source: *Ethnologue*)

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