

January 2023

The **Guatemala Medical Resource Partnership (GMRP)** is a project of the Thiensville-Mequon Rotary Clubs, started in 2005 by Doug Hansen, formerly of Washington Island, WI and his Rotary Club members. January of 2020 was the 16th clinic sponsored by the group. The mission serves the rural population around Oliveros, Guatemala, an extremely poor area in the southeastern part of Guatemala, near the Pacific Ocean and the border with El Salvador. That year around 800 people registered for care at our 5-day clinic. Our clinic is often the only medical care they receive during the year.

Doug and his wife Pam had gone to Guatemala to visit their son Brian, who was in the Peace Corps there. They were so very touched by the people's poverty, that they came home determined to do something about it. It took Doug and his Rotary Club members a whole year of research, and the finding of Enrique Gandara (Kico), the Guatemalan Rotary member working in Madison WI who was key in putting the plans together, to bring their hopes to fruition. It is his ranch the team stays at. And his workers who help set up the clinic and feed us. His contacts help us get through customs down there with minimal hassle, and he arranges the in-country transportation and protection we have.

After the first mission, a team of T-M Rotarians went back to Oliveros and updated and rewired the school electrical system. Another team went back and hooked up a water tower to the existing well that now serves a large part of the area. The water is chlorinated and fluoridated, providing safe drinking water and improving dental health. Water does not go to individual homes, but is within walking distance for people to fill jugs.

Currently, every January, a team of about 45 people, consisting of medical providers, dentists, dental assistants, interpreters, optometrists, and general volunteers—who all personally pay over \$1,300 each for their own airfare, bus transportation in Guatemala, and room and board-travel to Guatemala. At times we have a nutritionist to help with education. We have not sent a team in 2021-2023 due to Covid problems

The clinic is held in a local elementary school which doesn't hold classes for the week we are there. Our examining tables, dental chairs and other equipment are stored in a donated semi-trailer.

Trying to make this a partnership, local parents and teens help us haul the equipment into the school to set up, and also to put it all away. Elementary teachers help with registration and escorting patients to the right areas. Other volunteers are a Guatemalan psychologist who generally joins us, and at times a Guatemalan ob/gyn and his assistant are with us for 2 days. We've also had Guatemalan dentists join us as well. Students of English help serve as interpreters.

In 2014, we began our Continuing Care program. For several years we had been looking for a way to serve people who needed various surgeries and care after we left, --for cataracts, hernias, orthopedic problems, cancer, etc. This part of our program has been truly life-changing for the patients involved! We have continued to provide this through covid years.

In 2014 we found Floridalma Quintanilla (Flory), a Guatemalan woman who works at a hospital for the poor in Antigua and knows her way around the medical system in the country. Since then, she has organized our approximately 145 yearly follow-up patients and their care, shepherding them through the bus ride to the hospital, 3 hours away from their town, and through all the necessary trips and tests that lead to surgery.

The operations are provided free of charge by teams of rotating international surgeons, we pay the hospital surgical fee. Flory is a genius at getting other services donated—ambulance rides to the hospital by the local fire department, prosthetic devices for our amputees by another mission, half price fees from the hospital, free chemo treatments for a needy mother, wheel chairs and much more. She also asks patients to help pay for part of their tests and treatment, as she feels they are able.

Still, we need to pay her salary (\$400 a month), hospital fees, doctor consults, lab tests, MRIs, CT scans, X-rays, prescriptions, Covid tests and transportation for the patients. We often have to pay for dental work, since some teeth are so badly infected that there would be a risk to do surgery without repairing them.

Our budget is about \$15,000 for the week-long clinic and \$40,000 or more for the Continuing Care program.

We are always looking for medical personnel, dentists, optometrists and interpreters to join our team.

Please visit our web site <http://gmrp.org> to get a better idea of our project -- to view a short video, see photos of the mission, read short articles about the people served, and see quotes from our team members. You may also donate online or send checks to T-M Rotary-GMRP, PO Box 182, Washington Island, WI 544246