

ABOUT HEARTBEAT INTERNATIONAL

In the early 1970's, Federico Alfaro, MD, a Guatemalan physician, was treating a seventeen-year-old patient. The boy had a heart condition cardiologists refer to as "heart block", an affliction in which the heartbeat continually slows until one day the heart just stops pumping. The boy's condition was curable. The problem was he was poor. Dr. Alfaro tried desperately to find financial assistance to provide the boy with the pacemaker he needed. But in the end he had to watch the boy die. He swore another countryman would not die because they could not afford a pacemaker.

Dr. Alfaro started a movement that would grow from one country to spread all over the globe.

His mission was simple, to save lives globally by providing cardiovascular implantable devices and treatment to the needy people of the world.

In just sixteen months Heartbeat International was established and as the years followed, over 11,000 lives have been saved all over the world.

In 1985, our Rotarians participated in the formation of the first Pacemaker Bank in Trinidad and Tobago along with 15 other countries; Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Panama, Barbados, The Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ecuador, Philippines, Thailand, India, Venezuela, and China.

Locally, the Rotary Club of St. Augustine had a huge part to play as they and other member clubs assumed the management of the Pacemaker Bank from 1988 to 2006.

Thereafter, the Bank was reorganized and is now managed as a Heart Centre under the Management of Heartbeat International of Trinidad & Tobago, via an Independent Board of Directors that includes five of our Rotarians.

The Rotary Club of St. Augustine remains one of the main sponsors of the Heart Centre. The Club also jointly manages the Heartbeat International Regional Distribution Centre that collects, store, and ship Pacemakers and Defibrillators to other Heart Centres worldwide.

We continue to make substantial financial contributions to both Heartbeat International and the Regional Distribution Centre on an annual basis to assist with the operational costs. To April 15, 2013, 805 pacemakers and defibrillators at an estimated cost of TT 48.2 million have been donated.