



NORTH IDAHO EYE INSTITUTE & NORTH IDAHO CATARACT AND LASER CENTER
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Mission 2007

Dr. StormoGipson Leads Team of 26 to Guatemala

JUNE 2007



A team of 26 volunteers worked hard during a June visit to Hospital de la Familia. Some of what was accomplished in one week: 485 Clinic Patients were seen for eye exams, 144 surgeries were done, including Glaucoma, Strabismus, Cataracts, and Plastic Surgery. These are impressive numbers. Especially when one considers that a typical week at North Idaho Cataract and

Laser Center will see 35-40 surgery patients. They also had an incredible sense of teamwork and a dedication to making certain that the best service was provided while working from 7:30 in the morning until 7:30 at night. But the numbers only tell part of the story. The more impressive part is the stories of the people behind the statistics. These are not just any 485 people- these are often people with no other

means of obtaining eye care. These are people who come barefooted because they have no shoes, people who travel for hours via public bus and even come across country borders to reach the clinic. These are people for whom Hospital de La Familia is their only hope. While we can't tell all 485 stories we can tell some of them. Working together the team has improved many lives: their patients and their own.

HERMAN'S STORY

Herman's dream is to become a truck mechanic. He was doing an internship at an auto shop when the accident occurred.

After helping to replace some brakes he went to bring back some sodas for everyone. Herman decided to try opening his soda with a mechanic wrench and the bottle cap flew straight into his eye.



Herman and his family wait for surgery

The impact of the bottle cap created a cataract in his lens. Herman was unable to go back to work.

(See "Herman" continued on page 2)

Herman's Story...

continued from page 1

A month passed before Herman was able to get treatment from our eye care team. After surgery, Herman can once again see out of his right eye. He looks forward to pursuing his dream of becoming a truck mechanic and is considering starting a new fashion trend: wearing Sun glasses indoors, especially in the car shop!



Dr. Ed Riley, Anesthesiologist from Stanford, California proudly wears his team shirt.

North Idaho

Eye Institute



Magdela had traveled for 6 hours by bus with her son Jose and her daughter Elvia (on her right in the picture). Her children are corn farmers.

Although her husband had passed away, Magdela was helping with grandmotherly duties and house chores until she lost her vision. She had heard from a neighbor in her village about this clinic run by Catholic Nuns with visiting Doctors. Hopeful that the rumors would be true she had come to the

clinic in January.

After a preliminary check-up she was given an appointment for June.

Like most of our cataract patients, Magdela experienced a dramatic improvement the day after surgery. With her

**Beautiful
Embroidery**

new lens she can now see people and has good working vision. Babysitting grandkids should not be a problem. But her daughter will have to take over the hand sewing needed to make the beautiful traditional women's embroidered blouses called "Huipiles" for which Guatemala is famous.



Jennifer's Story

Three year old Jennifer's mother is Marciela and her father is Juan. He works selling car parts in a town called Huehuetenango, 5 hours away from the clinic.

The family first heard rumors about a surgery that could fix their

daughter's crossed eyes over a year before her surgery.

The rumors directed them to come to a town called "Nuevo Progreso". So one weekend, they got in their car and asked directions at every stop. Eventually after 8 hours of driving and asking directions they got to Nuevo Progreso and were able to make an appointment to come back in June.



Learning how to take care of her daughter's eye postoperatively.



Waiting for anesthesia to wear off in the recovery room, Jennifer sleeps in her mother's arms.

On their second trip, knowing the way, it took them 3 hours driving time. Jennifer is the youngest of three children, her older sisters are 8 and 6 years old. Surgery went well with no complications and Jennifer should gain full function in her eyes.



Guadalupe smiles before her surgery



Help for Hardworking Coffee Farmers

Sixty-eight year old Guadalupe had a cataract in her right eye. She works on a coffee farm with her husband and four kids. Her

husband was too old to make the 6 hour journey via public bus. They have 22 acres of land for coffee growing and earn about \$100 a month.

Like most patients, Guadalupe found out about Hospital de la Familia from word of mouth. She heard about the eye surgery clinic from someone at her local church who had received eye surgery a year ago. Word of the excellent service provided by these foreign medical groups has spread throughout

all of Northern Guatemala and Southern Mexico.

Guadalupe came with her daughter who moved a few miles away in a nearby town. With the help of her daughter, Guadalupe recovered from surgery the next day with no complications and good vision in her right eye. Guadalupe was also given a new eyeglass prescription which will help her left eye vision as well. She and her daughter look forward to life being a little easier around the farm now that Mom can see.

I once was blind, but now I see.....

Petrolina is a 93 year old woman who came to us with

cataracts that made her completely blind.



She came from the town of Lijon two hours away, and she has 2 sons who are corn farmers and a daughter who makes tortillas.

Her blindness left her completely dependent on family members. Since the surgery was successful, Petrolina can now walk by herself. This will make life so much easier for her and her hardworking family.

Encedina and husband Elias, have been married for fifty-seven years. They sell children's clothes for a living. They are constantly making each other laugh. They traveled by bus for over 7 hours to northern Guatemala. Almost half of the patients come from southern Mexico because they can't afford the \$1,600 it costs to have eye surgery in Mexico. This was Encedina and Elias' second visit to Hospital de La Familia. Two years earlier Elias had a successful cataract surgery. Because of her loss of vision from cataracts, Encedina had been dependant on her husband for help with her daily tasks and even moving about. But now, after the surgery, Encedina no longer needs her husbands help to walk, although they remain inseparable. She made it through the surgery with her health and sense of humor intact.



Kate Stormogipson, far left, an eye exam volunteer, enjoys talking with Encedina and family. "They are so inspiring. I hope I'm laughing as much as they do when I'm 70!"

For information about supporting the work of these teams, contact Karen Sines at 208-667-2531

What a Difference a Pair of Shoes Will Make

Felix had cataract surgery in his right eye. Felix lives on a corn farm with his two sons. Although they are farmers, they don't own the land and are instead sharecroppers. Because of the rent money they must pay to work the land, their earnings are very meager and they could barely afford the bus fare to reach Nuevo Progreso.

Once they arrived the nuns, seeing how poor they were, put them up for free and

provided all the medical work for free as well.



Allison Granier with her friend Felix and the pink shoes!

Felix is so poor he walked in without shoes. He had in fact walked barefoot for two hours along a dirt road to get from his farm to the nearest village where he and his sons caught buses to Nuevo Progreso.

The surgery went as planned and Felix was able to regain his vision. As an added bonus one volunteer, Alli-

son, gave him a pair of shoes. Felix was the same shoe size, didn't own any shoes, and Allison was planning on leaving these shoes behind anyway.

Bright pink crocs. When asked how he felt about being the only corn farmer in



Guatemala with bright pink shoes Felix answered, "I feel better than before."