



From the Executive Director. . .

As 2006 draws to a close, I want to acknowledge the volunteers and donors who have helped Healing the Children – Southwest during the past year. Your generosity has given many children a chance for a better, healthier life. In the coming year, I hope we can broaden our circle and expand our work to improve the health and wellbeing of children around the corner, around the world.

Thank you and best wishes for a joyful holiday season.

Rita Lavin, Executive Director

HTC-SW: Local Children's Programs

When HTC-SW was founded in 1989, the goal was to help children overseas who had severe medical conditions. No local children were served because there was rarely a need. By the mid-1990s, however, that situation had begun to change. Health care costs began to skyrocket, and government funding at both the local and national level started to erode. With fewer employers funding health care insurance, families felt the pinch. In particular, young parents with a medically challenged child found themselves with few resources to meet extraordinary medical expenses. Since then, the health care crisis has intensified to the point where HTC now finds itself serving many local children.

On The Front Line

One way HTC helps children in Albuquerque is by working closely with the public school system. A number of our referrals come from school nurses who see the children every day and know their needs and their family situation.

In a recent case, for example, the school nurse contacted HTC when a young boy's critical asthma medication ran out. Changes in Medicaid resulted in his being dropped from the program, and his parents were unable to afford his medicine. During the three months it took to get him reinstated, HTC paid for his medicine.

HTC also is helping a child with a growth on her arm that will require four surgeries to remove completely—her mother's insurance provides only partial coverage.

Another local child with a serious eye condition required an exam because his father was between jobs and had lost his insurance, which previously covered expenses related to his son's condition.

HTC also may provide funds when tight school budgets preclude special equipment purchases. Recently, HTC purchased a scale for an elementary school as part of an effort to prevent and treat childhood obesity. We also have provided schools with donated wheelchairs, which are used to transport children who normally use crutches out of the school building quickly during fire drills, and with supplies for eye examinations.

Shortfalls

When Medicaid provides only partial help, HTC helps fill the gaps. For example, Medicaid pays for only one wheelchair cushion a year. But because many wheelchair-bound children are incontinent, one cushion hardly suffices. That's when HTC will step in with needed assistance. HTC also helps families in need during the seven years it takes for a child to go through the developmentally disabled (DD) waiver process.

Some other examples of HTC-provided assistance include:

- Helping a young boy in a wheelchair who wanted a walker so he could become more independent. Medicaid provided only one piece of equipment—his wheelchair—so HTC bought him a walker.



This is What HTC is All About!

- Providing a specialized potty chair that a mother needed for her growing daughter. HTC purchased the seat, which was beyond her limited income.
- Currently, we are looking for assistance for a family who needs to make their front and bathroom doors wheelchair accessible for their 10-year-old, wheelchair-bound daughter.

Advocating for the Children

Another way HTC serves families of children with medical needs is to act as an advocate with insurance companies and occasionally with government agencies. Some parents need help completing paperwork in a timely manner in order to qualify for benefits. In other cases, HTC helps to match

(Continued from Page 1)

parents with appropriate support groups, government agencies, and private associations such as Easter Seals and the American Heart Association. If a child has a rare syndrome, HTC volunteers search the web for information, seeking help from other HTC chapters, and even providing air fare if the child requires treatment out of state.

Providing Assistance Statewide

HTC works with physicians, schools, families, and other agencies across New Mexico, helping children who require assistance. For example, HTC paid for much needed dental work for a child in Fort Sumner.

We also work closely with a physician at the Cleft Lip and

Palate Clinic, providing him with supplies and offering parents special nursers and nipples to feed their babies until they are old enough for surgery. The doctor travels throughout the state, bringing his services to parents who might otherwise find it impossible to travel to Albuquerque for treatment.

Your donation of money, supplies, or time is a critical part

of HTC efforts to help local children. Won't you please continue your support? Contact us if you have unused supplies or equipment—especially wheelchairs—that you wish to donate. Let us know if you can donate time to assist us. Readers in Texas and Colorado, we'd like to hear from you. If you have ideas for helping families in your area give us a call. Thank you.

HEALING THE CHILDREN NEEDS YOU!

This coming year - 2007 - we are hoping to sponsor six children from Central America, who need medical treatment. We have the hospital beds, we have the medical volunteers, we have the supplies, and now we need **you** to welcome a child into your family.

We are looking for dedicated, caring people who want to serve as host families for children accompanied by an adult relative traveling to the United States for surgery or as foster families for children traveling alone. Children usually stay with a family for several weeks while receiving medical care. Once a child is sufficiently recovered, he or she returns home.

Welcoming a child can be such a rewarding experience that some families repeatedly have opened their homes to a child. Such was the case with Carol Eiffert who reports that after a "great experience" with a young cardiac patient, "we were hooked for many years." Kindy and Lenny Martinez have fostered four children, one of whom - Nelson - returned three times for additional surgery. When Nelson, who is now 7, first arrived from Honduras, he was four months old and had four serious heart defects. Today, "he's very active, playing soccer and going to school," report Kindy and Lenny, who recently visited

Nelson in his hometown."

Lucy, another child from Honduras who was fostered by the Martinez family, quickly tired during play, her activities severely limited by her cardiac condition. Now, Lenny reports, "she scrambles up the hillsides of her village like a mountain goat."

What It Takes

All children need love, counsels Lorenza Garcia, who with her husband Felix has fostered four children. "If you are able to give love, they will respond. You need to think of these children as one of your own — a member of your family. When you see a child progress toward health, it is so rewarding — just as if your own child were being healed."

But, cautions Lorenza, families must be prepared for the commitment of time and energy required to deal with a child who is ill and his or her post-operative recovery. If you are thinking of hosting a child, here are some considerations to factor into your decision:

- ◆ Although it is not a requirement for there to be a stay-at-home parent, it is helpful to have one family member who can commit to making a child feel at home. Children need to be taken to and from pre- and post-operative appointments, and it is important for family



Lorenza With Jose

members to visit frequently and for extended periods during a child's hospitalization. Carol Eiffert explains that "I much preferred the foster experience when I could stay home."

- ◆ Foreign-language skills are not required, although they can be helpful.
- ◆ Be prepared for cultural differences. Some children may have strong food preferences, for example. One family reported that their foster child did not care for American meat and dairy products and instead wanted rice and beans. However, another family found that their foster daughter loved chicken nuggets! Flexibility is the key.
- ◆ Some children may not be accustomed to American

hygienic practices and will need to be taught to brush their teeth or to wash their hands regularly.

- ◆ Children need to be kept occupied, especially older children. Toys, stuffed animals, games, access to a computer, and other appropriate activities can help a child feel more comfortable in his or her new surroundings.

Foster families must be licensed, which entails a home study and background check; host families are interviewed by a team.

If you're interested in finding out more about serving as a host or foster family, call us at (505) 228-1404 or email us at htc_sw@hotmail.com. We'd be delighted to answer your questions and put you in touch with others who have helped a child toward health.

ENT Medical Mission to El Salvador: No More Sore Throats!



Fun Before Surgery

Twenty children from El Salvador feel much better today because of an HTC – Southwest –sponsored otolaryngology team that traveled to the country in late October. Our thanks to this terrific group of physicians and nurses who made it all possible: Dr. Chris Friess, surgeon and

Dr. Pierce Cornelius, anesthesiologist – both from Bend, Oregon; Dr. Cecelia Prieto of Dallas, pediatrician; Deb Stanger of Albuquerque’s Presbyterian Hospital, surgical nurse; and Madelle Friess and Wilene Cornelius, recovery nurses. We also would like to thank Dr. Diego Gonzalez of

Anesthesia Specialists for his generous support, and the Ralph and Eileen Swett Foundation for their grant, which helps pay for in-country expenses, such as x-rays.

This was HTC – Southwest’s first visit to El Salvador. After arriving in the capital of San Salvador, the physicians and nurses traveled to the village of Santiago Texacuangos, which is located high on a mountainside above Lake Ilopango outside San Salvador. Surgery was performed at Hospital Divina Providencia, founded by a Belgian nun, now 90, who continues to play a role in managing the facility.

After screening 31 potential candidates, the team identified 20 children who required surgery. They then set to work to remove infected tonsils and adenoids that in some cases were the size of walnuts!



Julia

The team was very well received. HTC’s Bobby Krehbiel, who traveled with the group, praised the participants’ warmth and sensitivity toward the children and their parents. In fact, several of the families commented that they had never encountered medical personnel who spoke to them in such a sincere, non-patronizing manner.

Once again, our deepest thanks to everyone who made this trip possible

Cardiac Screening Trip

In late October, a cardiology team comprised of Dr. Steve Yabek, cardiologist from Pediatric Cardiology Associates; Doug Blagg, echocardiogram technician; and Shelly Ogle, RN flew to El Salvador to screen candidates for cardiac surgery in the United States.

In all, the group saw 61 children, several of whom will receive surgery at Albuquerque’s Presbyterian Hospital, which each year generously donates several beds for the treatment of HTC-sponsored children. In 2007, we hope to take up to six children, and through our network of resources in other states we are working to accommodate additional children who require surgery.

During the group’s stay in El Salvador, a TV station in San Salvador covered the team’s work, and Shelly, who speaks fluent Spanish, was interviewed by *El Diario de Hoy*, a daily published in the capital. Such positive coverage and the sensitivity displayed by both the cardiac and ENT teams in El Salvador underscore another important aspect of our efforts – serving as goodwill ambassadors from the US to other parts of the world.

Our deepest thanks to each of the team members for their participation. We’d like to note once again that all of the medical personnel who travel abroad on HTC-sponsored missions are volunteers.

If you would like to assist with the El Salvadoran children coming to the US for surgery or if you are interested in serving as a host or foster family for a child, please contact us.

UPDATE on GABY:



Gaby and Her Mother Thanking HTC

Good news on Gaby, a young lady who received cardiac surgery at Presbyterian Hospital earlier this year and who was featured in the Summer 2006 newsletter. While the team was in San Salvador, she received an echo-cardiogram from Doug Blagg, and Dr. Yabek reports that she is doing well and won’t need another echo for at least a year. While visiting El Salvador with the cardiac team, RN Shelly Ogle—who attended Gaby when she was in the US—enjoyed a wonderful stay with Gaby’s family.

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SEND A NURSE FUND

In addition to donating their skills and vacation time, members of HTC medical teams traveling abroad pay their own expenses, including air fare and hotel rooms. But not everyone who wants to serve can underwrite the considerable cost of a trip aboard. To encourage more nurse and physician's assistant volunteers, HTC is launching a new fund to help defray the travel expenses of those medical personnel who want to serve but who cannot afford the cost of the trip. If you would like to contribute to this important effort, please consider a donation to help send a nurse to an area of need.

GOODSEARCH.COM

Did you know that your clicks help support HTC at www.goodsearch.com? Every time you search the web using Goodsearch, which is like Google, HTC receives a penny! The first time you use the search engine, type in Healing the Children - Southwest. After that, Healing the Children will appear automatically, saving you time.

Wanted: Volunteers for Central America

We are looking for volunteer surgeons, anesthesiologists, physicians' assistants, and nurses for a medical trip to Central America in the Spring or Fall of 2007. If you are interested or know of someone who might want to participate:

**please call us at
(505) 228-1404**

**or email us at
htc_sw@hotmail.com.**

Healing the Children

... around the corner, around the world

I would like to Volunteer

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Medical Mission to Guatemala



HTC Goes to El Salvador – Pictures of our ENT and Cardiac Screening

