



# Partners in Health of Maine

*Compañeros en la Salud*

Volunteers sharing the gift of health

December 2014

## *Our Mission:*

*Partners in Health of Maine is a group of medical professionals and technical experts who have given their time and expertise to improve the health care in Central America. Since 1976 we have been providing medical care, equipment, education, and technical assistance to the people of this area. Our belief is that caring individuals becoming "Partners in Health" with their third world counterparts can foster long-term improvement.*

## A Letter from the President

Dear Friends

It has been an exciting year as we have several projects that are in process or will soon get underway

One of the highlights of our spring trip was Dr. Swett's presence who is an experienced orthopedic surgeon from Dover Foxcroft who has been instrumental in teaching new skills to the orthopedic surgeons. He has developed a wonderful one to one relationship with Ernesto Spinoza and continues to communicate with him about problems after he has left.

The other highlights were Ernie Grant's many carpentry accomplishments and Jill Grant's continued improvements on the house, creating new projects, and keeping everyone happy.

Rory Curtin, a student at the College of the Atlantic from North Haven, accompanied us on our recent trip. She has an interest in public health and it was a pleasure to have her as part of the team.

Steve Johnson of the Rotary Club of Bangor has made a commitment to proceed with the water and sanitation project for the 10 villages along the Rio Cocco in conjunction with the Outreach Program run by the Moravian Clinic in Bilwaskarma. It is a very generous three year commitment on the part of Rotary with the plan to proceed with the project in three villages a year. Community involvement in building the latrines, creating new wells, or repairing them will hopefully insure their sustainability.

The Palliative Care program has gained a good foothold in Managua with the

formation of a palliative care group consisting of twelve physicians. Megan Jordan who is a Palliative Care physician and new board member of PIHOM has given many lectures at different hospitals in Managua and spent an incredible amount of time getting the Palliative Care group on its feet. They have received some financial assistance from the Rotary Club in Ann Arbor, which was initiated by my sister Barbara Bach.

The Operating room has been undergoing renovation and we are hopeful that it will support more specialists coming to the hospital to share their skills. This November Mark Grant, a surgeon from Eastern Maine Medical Center joined us and was successful in performing and teaching several laparoscopic cholecystectomies.

We also have a 40-foot container at Fox and Ginn Movers that contains about 16,000 pounds of equipment including two X Ray machines. Thanks to President Mike Jennings and his staff, it is now ready for shipment.

Thank you for your continued support.  
Robert Bach

*Dr. Bach was presented with the Surgical Volunteerism International Award from the American College of Surgeons on October 28th during their annual Clinical Congress in San Francisco. Dr. Bach was nominated by Peter Toussaint, MD, a former volunteer from Ft. Kent.*



*Dr. Richard Swett, orthopedic surgeon helping Dr. Ernesto Espinoza*



*Dr. Mark Grant, general surgeon from EMMC and Manual Salas, general surgeon from Nicaragua*



*Dr. Mark Grant (far right) teaching Dr. Manual Salas the art of laparoscopic surgery.*



Ernie Grant (left) with his helper (right) in front of a shelf he has just completed which was requested by Emergency Room Staff.

## Building Diplomacy One Shelf at a Time

When Ernie Grant first went to Nicaragua he was not sure what his role would be. He had overcome his fear of flying and finally arrived in Puerto-Cabezas. Once he had acclimated himself he started building cupboards and tables. Soon he was met with a barrage of requests from the hospital. He began working with three local Nicaraguans who all easily overcame any language barrier.

Ernie based his operation at the guest house and then moved the finished shelving units to the hospital. They were installed in many areas including the emergency room, intensive care unit, and neonatal unit.

The nurses and doctors were very grateful for these units as equipment became much more accessible. Ernie is always busy during his two week stay. Despite his lack of Spanish, he has won the hearts of the people he has met because of his easy going personality and friendly manner. He has made a real difference in his own special way and is welcomed as a new member of the Board.

## Early Morning Ride

*An early morning mist enshrines the huts along the way  
As I bicycle along the roads of dirt and red clay*

*Women walking with heavy pails of water on their heads  
Or fishing gear concerned with all who need to be fed*

*Men wielding their long machetes trying to clear the land  
Young boys on horseback chasing cows with lassoes in hand*

*Children running barefoot after wooden hoops they had made  
Pigs and chickens running free with eggs scattered wherever laid*

*A woman appears out of the mist with several cassavas to show  
As a gift of gratitude for the surgery that she had sometime ago*

*Then I see a woman sitting on her porch in her wheel chair  
A friendly smile transcends the burden she has to bear*

*Small groups of people walk through the mist church bound  
So grateful even though their blessings not easily found*

*Soon familiar hymns transcend the poverty that exists before me  
And once again I begin to believe in the things I can not see*

Robert Bach, Nicaragua, 2014

## A Visit to the Jail



Jill Grant with Chief Warden making plans for new prison clinic.

This year I became aware of the very difficult situation in the jail in Puerto-Cabezas. Prisoners live in severely overcrowded conditions with very limited medical care. On a following visit I spoke with Florence Levy and Dr Ivania Lopez of the Ministry of Health (MINSA) about the situation.

An agreement was made that if Partners in Health of Maine would help renovate two available rooms in the prison, MINSA would then provide two doctors and medications. Prisoners would then receive medical care in a more timely manner and would not have to be sent to the hospital, Ernie and his crew were able to renovate these two rooms and now the prison has a viable clinic.

## Future Goals/Plans

- 1) Completion of Palliative Care room at Hospital in Puerto Cabezas
- 2) Initiation of well, latrine, and water filter project in three of the villages along the Rio Cocco region as sponsored by International Rotary of Bangor in February under guidance of Steve Johnson
- 3) Participation with the U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command U.S. Fourth Fleet during their mission to Puerto Cabezas in on the USNS Comfort in May
- 4) Continuation of laparoscopic training program under the guidance of Mark Grant MD, surgeon Eastern Maine Medical Center

It is with sadness that we learned of the passing of Dr Peter Haupert. He initially spent six years as a missionary doctor at Thaeler Memorial situated on the northeastern border of Nicaragua. After the war he directed his efforts to establishing an outreach program in the same area that has significantly lowered infant and maternal mortality. Morbidity from infectious disease has been reduced as well He leaves a legacy of promoting preventive medicine that evolved from a career in curative medicine. He was an enthusiastic board member and will be replaced by his son David Haupert who shares his father's passion for preventative medicine.