

## Smile, Dentists! We Have a Great Project for You!

We've learned that many Native American children living on reservations in the western states are in desperate need of dental care. Some HTC chapters from other states have taken dental teams to a few of the neediest areas—and we are planning to do the same. There is a place for you in this project if you'd like to help us change the world, one child at a time.

We're looking for volunteer dentists and dental hygienists to take part in trips like this. They might last four to seven days and could be scheduled in the warmer months.

We could also expand the scope of your effort. Other HTC chapters have taken hats, scarves, mittens, and socks to distribute on the reservations and have found these gifts very welcome.

Are you interested? Of course you are! Call our office at 616 281 6972 or email us through our website, [www.htcmichiganohio.org](http://www.htcmichiganohio.org) – we'll be waiting to hear from you.



*Smiles all around!*



**Healing  
the  
Children®**

### MICHIGAN-OHIO CHAPTER

2140 - 44th Street S.E., Suite 105, Grand Rapids, MI 49508  
(616)281-6972 • FAX (616) 281-6973 • [www.htcmichiganohio.org](http://www.htcmichiganohio.org)

Address Service Requested

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Permit #1220



# The Healing Heartline

Christmas 2007

*Healing the Children / Michigan-Ohio*

*Vol. 21 No. 2*



*Angie*

*Once upon a time* there were three little hearts and one medium-sized heart. They did not work properly, and the owners of those hearts did not grow properly.

They tired easily. They found it hard to breathe sometimes, or even to smile. Worst of all, those ailing hearts were going to wear out before they should.

Before Angie, Brisky, Genesis, and Wilfredo had lived good, full lives.

It was a very sad situation.

But then you got to work. All of you—the doctors and nurses and hospitals and therapists and host families and escorts and volunteers and donors—healed those three little and one medium-sized hearts.

Yes, it's true. Maybe you actually scrubbed in for Angie's surgery. Or maybe you didn't do that. Maybe you just made a modest donation to

Healing the Children this year. Both of you healed that little heart.

Maybe you were Brisky's host family. You fed her and housed her and kissed her when she hurt. Or maybe you weren't. Maybe you saw a story in our newsletter, decided you wanted to help, and did. All of you healed that little heart.

Maybe you were Genesis's escort on her long plane ride to Michigan. You helped her say goodbye to her parents and comforted her when she cried for them. Or maybe you weren't. Maybe, instead, you helped mail our newsletter each month. Both of you healed that little heart.

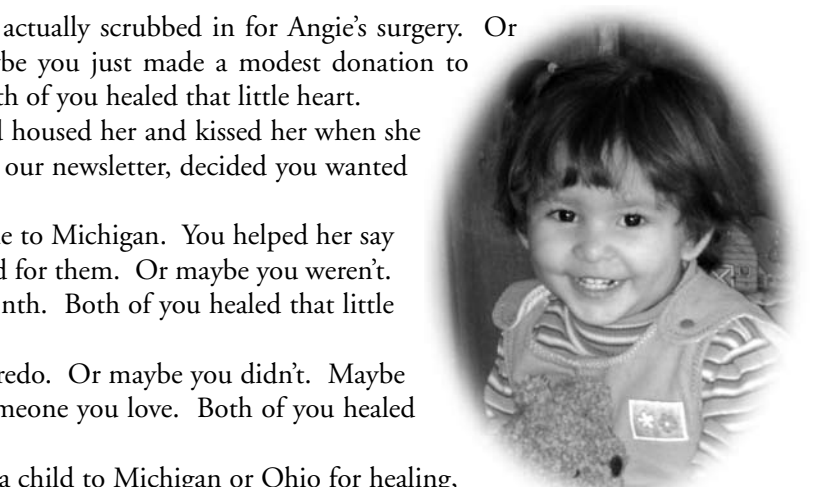
Maybe you performed a heart catheterization on Wilfredo. Or maybe you didn't. Maybe you made a gift to Healing the Children in honor of someone you love. Both of you healed that medium-sized heart.

Of course, that's not all you did. Whenever we bring a child to Michigan or Ohio for healing, you're there too. Whenever our medical teams travel abroad with their healing gifts, you go along. You've performed a lot of surgeries this year, fixed many dozens of teeth, set more than a few bones, sat at countless bedsides, wiped away a thousand tears. When we needed you, you were there.

Once upon a time there was a story about four little hearts and one medium-sized heart. It was a good story, and it had a happy ending.

That's because it was really a story about a lot of very, very big hearts. We thank you so very much.

*You can find Angie's, Brisky's, Genesis's, and Wilfredo's stories on pages 6-7.*



*Genesis*



*Wilfredo*



*Brisky*





## Yissely, with Love



Yissely Diaz, age three, flew from Honduras to Detroit one night last November. There to meet her at the airport was her host family, Scott and Laura Cassel. They were HTC veterans, experienced at dealing with sick kids from far away who need serious medical care. But there was something different about Yissely's visit. Laura Cassel tells the story beautifully.

Yissely arrived from Honduras a very frightened little girl on that November night. In fact, she was so frightened that I thought then and there, "I can never do this again . . . this is too hard! She's been ripped from her parents' arms, we can't understand each other, she's scared, she's sick, I am already tired and wavering, and she won't stop crying. Oh, can't I send her back and reconsider?" We had done this three times before, so I was as close to an expert host mom as one can be. Why was this different? We had had "difficult" before, but I must have sensed that those were only precursors, and that my ultimate challenge had just walked off that plane.

So I did not immediately recognize that love had just walked into my life. I was too consumed with how my life was going to change. When you bring these little packages into your home you learn about sacrifice. No more working out every day, getting Starbucks whenever

I want, scheduling things around only me. But you also gain—and in Yissely I received eight months that proved to be the sweetest in all my life.

Yissely was a gift wrapped with



Beautiful Yissely

a very strong will around a demanding but adorably funny personality embellished with great intelligence, and as we unwrapped her, we saw love everywhere, in her eyes, in her laugh, in her hugs as huge as the moon, in her tenacious spirit.

She had come to Michigan for surgeries on her club feet and her imperforate anus. The feet were done first. After an eight-hour procedure at William Beaumont Hospital, the surgeon, Dr. Jeffrey Yung, was very pleased with the results. These were not the worst club feet he had ever seen, only the second worst! All I could see were enormous casts on both legs.

We came home from the hospital, and after a few days it dawned on me that I was carrying her everywhere—to and from the bathroom, to and from the car, in and out of bed. Everywhere, for three long months. My arms ached, but my heart rejoiced, because she would never know what it was like to be crippled.

Yissely learned English and was soon ordering us around. She told us where to sit at dinner, what game to play after dinner, and whether she was in the mood for a bath or not. She loved to ride in the car, and the stroller was my saving grace.

We soon realized how smart she was. About three weeks after she arrived, I got a new car. Several weeks later, driving in that car, we pulled up to a car exactly like my old one. "There is your car, Laura," Yissely observed. She knew the exact color, make, and model of a car she had ridden in a few times many weeks earlier! This was the first of many revelations of her extraordinary memory.

Yissely blossomed here. Her vocabulary grew by leaps and bounds, and soon no one could tell her from an American-born three-year-old. She loved Barney, Dora, Cinderella, Elmo, and books, especially *Goodnight Moon*.

All this time, I was recognizing the love that she had brought with her. At the airport I had whined inwardly about losing my freedom, but now I was cherishing moments when I could sit on the couch with her, fresh from her bath, reading sto-



The casts are off! Yissely with Dr. Yung, Laura and Dr. Mansour (Resident)



After surgery, with Scott



New feet ... new Crocs!

2 / Changing the world, one child at a time

## Four Hearts, cont'd



Sixteen-year-old Wilfredo Matute was from Honduras. His heart ailment had seriously affected his health. He was tired all the time and had not been able to attend school.

At Helen DeVos Children's Hospital, Dr. Ronald Grifka assessed his situation and determined that Wilfredo's defect could be repaired with a procedure done during a heart catheterization. Dr. Grifka performed the catheterization, and after three hours, the blood flow to Wilfredo's heart increased and he gained strength and energy.

Dr. Grifka and his associates treated Wilfredo very kindly, with lots of explanation, interpretation, and encouragement. They were rewarded by seeing him blossom into a much more active boy.

Wilfredo's host family, Bob and Carole Pettijohn, enrolled him at Calvin Christian High School, where he enjoyed himself greatly. He was a star in Spanish class! Wilfredo loved family life with the Pettijohns (host parents extraordinaire) and Dixon (also from Honduras). The two boys became great friends, and they still communicate by telephone.

Wilfredo's health has improved so much that he is now attending trade school in Honduras.



Wilfredo and Dixon



## Joeline

If you've ever had an ear infection—or had a child who suffered from them—Joeline Williams will touch your heart. At eight years old, she suffered from *continuous* ear infections because of cysts in her ears, and all the pain that implies.

Joeline was from St. Kitts, and she came to Michigan to get those ears fixed. Dr. Ted Vanderveen, an

ear, nose, and throat specialist, performed her surgery at Holland Hospital. The procedure was successful, and Joeline's chronic infections are a thing of the past. Joeline was also treated by orthodontist Dr. Greg Oppenhuizen, who addressed her severe dental issues with extractions and orthodontia for her severe cross-bite.

Craig and Sherri Gebben and their daughters Kelsi and Courtney were Joeline's host family. "Joeline was full of energy, with a beautiful smile," Sherri says. "She attended school and was in Courtney's class; all the children loved her.

"She loved to dance, and when we took her rollerskating she was up and at it immediately!

"While she was here, Joeline didn't show much love and affection, but when we took her to the airport for her trip home, all that changed. She threw us all off when she hugged me tight and wept hard when we had to say goodbye. I realized then how much difference we'd made in her life. She called us when she got home and still sends us short emails.

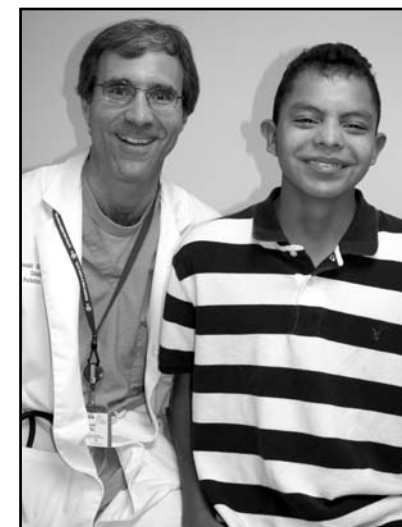
"She went back to St. Kitts with healing in her ears and loads of love in her heart from us."



Joeline had fun in the snow!



Joeline with Courtney



Wilfredo with Dr. Ronald Grifka



### Healing the Children/Michigan-Ohio

#### Board of Directors

Robert Jamula ... President	Richard Bouma ... Vice President	
H. Bernard Haviland ... Treasurer	Beth Bouws ... Secretary	
Robert Bruggink	Linda Mills	Martin Tittel
Marva Donovan	Robert Pettijohn	Patricia Williams
Gary Dopke	Albert Pierce, M.D.	

#### Staff

Executive Director.....	Helen Salan.....	616-281-6972
Newsletter Editor.....	Ruth Ann Brevitz.....	616-245-1776
Bookkeeper.....	Del Seitz.....	616-363-5603
Office Assistant.....	Dawn Mulder.....	616-281-6974
Area Coordinators		
Ann Arbor.....	Jill Taylor.....	734-475-2172
Ann Arbor.....	Debbie Craig.....	734-878-5584
Detroit.....	Marge Badowski.....	586-791-8882
Detroit.....	Janie Livingston.....	313-640-4640
Grand Rapids.....	Ruth DeKock.....	616-531-4886
Grand Rapids.....	Mary Polonowski.....	616-453-2958
Hastings.....	Sharon Boyle.....	269-623-3500
Holland.....	Rachelle Oppenhuizen.....	616-396-9743
Kalamazoo.....	Linda Mills.....	269-375-4414
Lansing.....	Susanne Dickerson.....	517-394-2580
Cincinnati.....	Lisa Burke.....	937-885-9930
Cincinnati.....	Kim Sterneberg.....	859-356-4563
Cincinnati.....	Jan Schumacher.....	937-685-2027
Toledo.....	Laura Rudolph.....	419-536-9373

7 / Changing the world, one child at a time



## Four Hearts ❄️



Angie



Angie with escort Kim Bishop

Unlike Angie, Brisleidy Matos of the Dominican Republic, age two, seemed fairly healthy when Allen and Donna DeWeerd met her at the airport in Grand Rapids. However, she had a heart defect, and if left untreated it would have caused serious problems down the road.

Brisky's heart repair took place in May, but part of her heart didn't respond properly, and she had to be put on a pacemaker. When her heart still did not pace normally after a week, a permanent pacemaker was implanted.

Brisky was treated by a fleet of doctors at Helen DeVos Children's Hospital. Dr. Steve Verkaik did her physical and treated her with antibiotics so that she could have surgery. Dr. Arnold Fenrich and Dr. Ronald Grifka were her cardiologists. Dr. Neal Hillman, pediatric heart surgeon, repaired her heart.

Donna DeWeerd says, "Brisky is beautiful. She has exquisite features. She is very independent, usually cheerful, and extremely brave. She does not like any restraints on her activity, but she was a model patient from start to finish. Of course, it helped that she was the center of attention in her corner of the ICU with personal attendants at her beck and call!

"In July, Brisky returned to her mama and papa in Santo Domingo. She is their only child, and we know their arms felt empty while she was gone."



Genesis



Genesis with Gretchen and Bob

Genesis Macias came to Michigan from Honduras at the age of two. She too needed surgery for a heart defect that if left untreated would shorten her life. It made itself known through her very small stature: she was failing to thrive.

Dr. Neal Hillman repaired Genesis's heart at Helen DeVos Children's Hospital, patching a hole so that blood will flow correctly. As a result, she will probably grow well and reach a normal size—and she has a normal life expectancy. Dr. Arnold Fenrich was Genesis's cardiologist.

Genesis's host parents were Bob and Gretchen Worcester. Gretchen says, "Genesis is an adorable little girl! She is also a typical two-year-old girl—she loves to be cuddled, loves to play with dolls, loves to open every drawer and make a mess!

"Her visit here was rather straightforward—for heart surgery. She recovered quickly, and her chest scar was barely visible when it healed. Meanwhile, she has literally been given a new lease on life. Not so straightforward after all!

"We stand amazed at the courage of her parents, who send their baby off to a foreign country, into the hands of strangers who speak a different language, to face life-threatening surgery. We are proud to be part of their story."



Brisky with Dr. Verkaik



Brisky & friend



## This Year, You Built a Hospital in Ethiopia



In Ethiopia, 120,000 children contract rheumatic fever each year. In Ethiopia, many children die from complications of heart disease that could easily be treated surgically.

Children with heart ailments need specialized pediatric cardiac care.

In Ethiopia there was no such thing.

Until now.

Now, because of the commitment of and connections between individuals and organizations on three continents, a children's heart hospital is being built in Addis Ababa. It is the dream of Dr. Belay Abegaz, founder of the Children's Heart Fund of Ethiopia, and it will benefit thousands of children in Africa for years to come. Healing the Children initiated the effort to make Dr. Abegaz's dream come true by supporting his effort to build and equip this much-needed facility, and we have been joined by Chain of Hope UK, Project Cure (out of Denver), and others.

Our involvement will not end when the hospital opens its doors in early 2008. We will continue to serve Ethiopian children by sending medical teams to Addis Ababa to train Ethiopian medical professionals.

Dr. Abegaz's objectives in this amazing endeavor were to build a hospital, equip it, develop its professional staff, and sustain its existence through sound financial support. You, yes, you, through your generosity to Healing the Children, have helped him do this. You built a hospital. You furnished it with a cardiac catheterization lab, defibrillators, and all the other technology that works to heal little hearts. You will send the doctors and nurses who will share their expertise with its staff. You will ensure that it continues its life-saving mission.

Yes, really! You did all that. Thanks, from the bottom of *our* hearts.



Equipment arrives and the hospital nears completion.



### Yissely, cont'd

ries. I went from wanting to send her back to wanting to never send her back.

After three months, her casts were removed. I remember how beautiful her feet were. I carefully washed them, with tears streaming down my face. This is a moment one never forgets: a child's life has been changed forever. And yes, giving up my lattes was worth it.

Next day: rectal surgery. This too was successful, and we came home from the hospital in two days. But three days later my mother's instinct was put to the test. Yissely had not urinated in 36 hours, and I was concerned. I called the doctor, and immediately we were off to Beaumont Hospital. My instinct was correct: Yissely spiked a high fever and became very sick very quickly. The ER went into high gear, and we were off on a journey that wouldn't end for 10 more weeks.

They spent all night trying to diagnose her. Yissely was traumatized beyond belief. Finally it was determined that she had a serious bacterial infection. The bacteria had destroyed all the soft tissue in her rectal area, and her colon had collapsed. We were in and out of the hospital, had lots of tubes, bags, PIK lines, and several anal dilation procedures, but finally she was on the mend. Dr. Winston Chan, Yissely's pediatric surgeon, has all our thanks for what he did for her.

This was when my patience, love, and endurance were tested the most. And this was when we bonded the most. I had to slow down, let her heal, and realize that the time we spent together in the hospital was just as precious as any other time.

(Did I mention that my daughter was getting married in June? And that it was now May? I saw that Yissely could well be with us in June, and I simply decided that the important things would get done and if they didn't they weren't important. I have wonderful friends, and in the end I had all the help I needed.)

Yissely made a miraculous recovery and was cleared to go home. She returned to her parents two weeks before the wedding. It was a glorious reunion, and I was able to recover, at least a little, before watching my daughter walk down the aisle.

When Yissely left, did all that love go with her? At the airport, I felt that way. But, as you know, that kind of love doesn't end. And in fact, we've visited Yissely and her family in Honduras, and we are able to send her to a bilingual school in her town. Yissely was a gift of love to us, and we are deeply pleased to return the favor.



COOL NEW  
SHOES ...



# What We Did and What We Built: Honduras 2007

*Our Honduras 2007 team* did its healing work in San Juan de Flores, a town with many needs. Medical and dental, of course. In addition, the people needed shoes.

And, oh, yes—a kitchen.

The medical / dental team worked with Honduran dentists Dr. Gloria de Corea and Dr. Jose Rodriguez, and they had Peace Corps volunteers as translators. In the dental clinic they performed restorative dentistry on 260 people that week. The medical staff, dermatologists and general practitioners, saw and treated children with skin problems and many other ailments.

The 2006 team had learned that there was a real need for shoes in this area. Team member Kristine Sutton remembered that, and before the 2007 trip she and many friends gathered up bundles of shoes that the team was then able to distribute in San Juan de Flores.

The team's third project in San Juan de Flores was unique: they came to build a kitchen. It would be constructed at the community school so that needy children would be able to get two meals a day. Fellowship Christian Reformed Church and Ivanrest CRC provided financial support for the kitchen (and also for medicines), and Fellowship volunteers did the work on the ground—that's right, sawing, pounding, drilling, painting—and built that lovely kitchen from scratch. In the end it turned out to be even more wonderful than they thought: it is the first school kitchen in Honduras, providing hot meals to its students every day, and it's also become a center for village activities. Meeting a simple need turned into creating a stronger community.

As usual, team members enjoyed themselves. Beth Bouws writes, "Accommodations in-country were a bit different from the usual hotel. We did not know what to expect when we were told that the team would stay in a 'country house.' It was, however, a wonderful experience that included a fabulous in-house cook who even did the team's laundry. When we returned from a long, hot day's work, there were our clothes, undies and all, flapping in the breeze."

Mike Ramsey, one of the construction workers, adds his reflections: "Seeing the lines of people looking for medical help that isn't available locally and watching the doctors and dentists helping, one by one, was truly amazing. The gift of building a full kitchen so the children of the school can eat two square meals a day was more rewarding than one can imagine. These kids, through our gifts of help, are able to live a better life. They will grow up knowing that they, too, can make a difference in someone's life. By donating our time, money, and support we're doing even more than helping one child at a time. We're making the world a better place."

*Team members: Beth Bouws, nurse/dental assistant and team co-leader; Dr. John Bouws, dentist and team co-leader; Dr. Bert Pierce, medical director; Dr. Chris Norman, dentist; Dr. Brian Gerondale, dermatologist; Kristine Sutton, Sharon Norman, and Sandra Drye, nurses; Ellie Postma, team aide; Ruth Eggerding, Jack Emelander, Jason Bode, Greg Bode, and Mike Ramsey, construction workers*



... AND A KITCHEN  
FOR THE ENTIRE  
VILLAGE!

