

Taking Care of What Matters ... on the Reservation

This grandma, Eleanor Thunder, lives on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. She makes sure her grandchildren get wholesome meals, and when we heard about her, she was cooking those meals on a hot plate. We decided that her one-woman nutrition project could use a technology upgrade, and as part of our domestic initiative, we bought her a new gas stove.

We have more plans for the reservation. We're planning a combined dental and work trip there in April 2009, and we need help. Dentists, hygienists, plumbers, furnace repairmen, and electricians—we have projects for you. Hats, mittens, coats, sports equipment, and school supplies—those are some of the things we want to donate, with your help, during our trip to the reservation.

This will be a rewarding and inspiring endeavor. We know we can count on you. For more information, please call us at 616-281-6972 or email us at htc@htcmichiganohio.org.



Eleanor Thunder and her new stove.



**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

Address Service Requested

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



The Healing Heartline

Holiday 2008

Healing the Children / Michigan-Ohio

Vol. 22 No. 2

What Matters

It takes someone with a heart big enough to embrace five ailing children from around the globe to put it this beautifully: "life matters, caring matters, love matters, and we have a chance to make these children realize that . . . they matter."

Laura Cassel, host mom five times over, wrote that as she thought about saying good-bye to her most recent charge, Ana Gonzales-Rosales (see their story on page 3). Doesn't it get right to the soul of healing the children?

They hurt. They matter. We care. We'll help.

You've shown us over and over that it's true. Each time you help us bring a child to this country; each time you help us send our medical teams overseas; each time you agree to be a host parent; each time you help us pack medical supplies or mail this newsletter; each time you offer your time and your medical expertise to an HTC child; each time you make the decision to donate to the profound and loving adventure that is Healing the Children, you pledge your faith in what matters. Life. Caring. Love. These precious children.

On their behalf, and from our hearts, thank you.



And now a story that perfectly illustrates Laura's words.

Soldiers, and especially soldiers serving in Iraq, are busy. They have a lot on their minds, to say the least. But they know what matters.

When members of the Michigan National Guard 46th M.P. Company serving at a Baghdad police station were approached by an Iraqi woman seeking help for her child, they paid attention. Sgt. Kaleb Strahl, Sgt. Judy Kieffer and Cpl. Cory La Fontaine listened as Salwa explained that her little son, Hasan, had a serious heart ailment and desperately needed treatment. They saw that the boy was in bad shape—gray complexion; blue lips and fingernails; severe fatigue.

Of course, no help of the kind he needed was available right there at the police station, so Hasan and Salwa left. But the soldiers didn't forget.

Mindful of what matters and armed with the medical information Salwa had given them, they and other members of the 46th M.P. began a determined wrestling match with bureaucracy and red tape. They emailed and faxed the medical information everywhere they could think of, but found only dead ends. Finally they contacted their Congressman, Bart Stupak.

continued on page 2



Hasan arrives in G.R.



Hasan and his family with his troops

Angelie Matters



Rose Angelie Pierre, age one-and-a-half, of Haiti, was oh! so adorable, but she suffered from hydrocephalus. Missionary Nora Leon referred her to HTC. Her host parents were Mark and Johnese Thibault of Grosse Pointe. Here is what Johnese had to say about her visit.

We called her Angelie, and she was like a little angel brought to us from heaven above and the angels at Healing the Children. She adjusted to our family and life with our five children very quickly. She loved all the attention, she slept like a dream right from the start, and she loved the food right away. While she could not sit up on her own, Angelie became stronger and a lot more alert and independent in the six weeks prior to her surgery.

Angelie's surgery took place at William Beaumont Hospital, with Dr. Karol Zakalik and Dr. Sasha Krishnamurthy performing the procedure. The ventriculostomy, which drains excess fluid from the brain without the need for a shunt, minimizes follow-up care needed in Haiti.



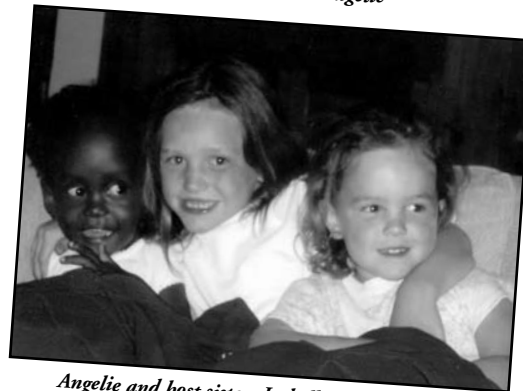
Back home with mom

Angelie did well with the surgery and was very brave. We had great care from the people at Beaumont before and after. Angelie quickly seemed to be doing more and more every day, holding a cup or a toy, picking up one Cheerio at a time. This gave her much-desired independence, the ability to feed herself and play with other children.

Angelie has returned to Haiti, and we keep her and Nora Leon in our prayers. She was our first HTC child, and we loved every minute of the experience. Our lives and those of our children have been forever touched by it, and we hope and pray we have the opportunity to do it again.



The Thibaults welcome Angelie



Angelie and host sisters Isabelle and Charlotte



Angelie with Johnese and Mark

What Matters, cont'd

That led them to Dr. Bob Connors, President of Helen DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids, who just happened to be in Washington meeting with the Congressman. Dr. Connors knows HTC very well; he called us and asked us to take the case.

Believe it or not (but of course this is Healing the Children), it was easy to find a doctor, a hospital, and a host family—people and institutions who know what matters. The hard part was finding Hasan again.

We have a lot of contacts in a lot of places, and we called in some we knew could help—the National Iraqi Assistance Center in Baghdad, the Humanitarian Operations Center in Kuwait, and the U.S. military. Finally, after six weeks, success! Hasan was located, and after permissions and visas and funds and available flights were procured, he and his mother landed at Gerald R. Ford International Airport in Grand Rapids last spring. Some of the soldiers who had worked so hard to bring him there were on hand.

Salwa thanked them one by one. "They tell me they will help. They do," she said.

Hasan's four-hour heart surgery was performed by Dr. Neal Hillman. Six weeks later, rosy and energetic, he was ready to go home.

"I want the world to know that the world is still a good place. I thank God from the bottom of my heart," his mother said.

Our thanks to all who knew—and proved—what matters: Helen DeVos Children's Hospital; Dr. Hillman; Dr. Ronald Grifka, pediatric cardiologist; Dr. Chris Norman, dentist; Dr. Brian and Patty Gerondale, Hasan and Salwa's host family; and most of all the men and women of the Michigan National Guard 46th M.P. out of Cheboygan. They're heroes who know how to change the world, one child at a time.

Luis, Vilma and Lilian Matter



Luis



Vilma



Lilian

We are delighted to offer an enormous thank you to Dr. Neal Hillman, Dr. Ronald Grifka, Dr. Sam Lacina, Helen DeVos Children's Hospital, and host families Bryan and Carol Nyeholt, Tim and Roxanne Bareman, and Jason and Danita Vander Kodde for all they did to heal our three little heart patients from Honduras, Luis Moran-Caseras, Vilma Fernanda Pavon Salinas, and Lilian Ramos Mendoza. To read more about these special children, their stories will be on our website after January 1st, www.htcmichiganohio.org.

Complicated surgeries, skilled care, and loving kindness were the gifts that repaired these three hearts. Changing the world, three children at a time . . . even better. Thank you!

What mattered to us this year

Our volunteers who said yes without hesitation:

- the doctors and dentists and nurses and prosthetists and therapists and all the professionals without whom there would be no healing of our children
- the host families whose homes and hearts are always open to a little child seeking shelter
- the Airline Ambassador escorts who travel around the world and back to change one life
- the area coordinators and board members whose work doesn't make headlines; it just makes all the difference

The hospitals who offered their rooms . . . their ORs . . . their staff . . . to hurting children.

The medical teams who tirelessly traveled the world to heal the children.

The faith communities whose support was a beacon for us.

The schools, and their students, who wrapped their arms around children who were very far from home.

Our donors. Without you . . . nothing.

Twenty-four years of healing the children . . . and more to come.

More than 10,000 children from the United States and all over the world whose lives have been changed, one child at a time.

They hurt.

They matter.

You cared.

You helped.

Thank you.





Abigia Matters



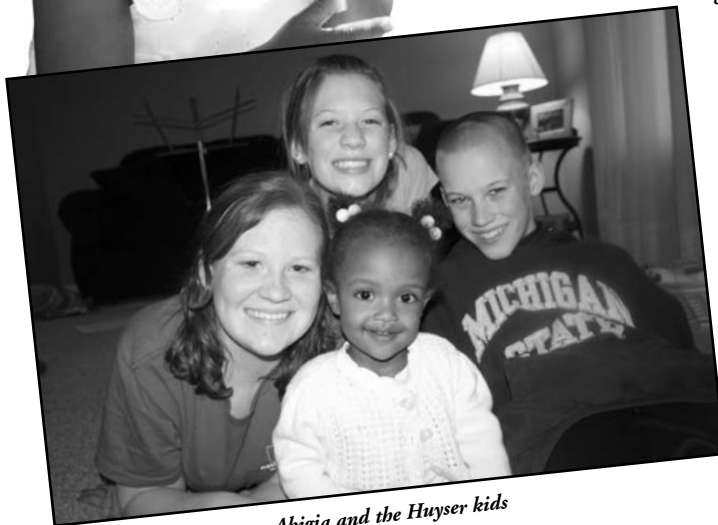
*A*bigia Worku, from Ethiopia, is another lovely little person. But when she came to Michigan at age 18 months, she was suffering from a serious and complex spinal disorder: a tethered spinal cord. She also had severe scoliosis, and her spinal condition would have made that even worse. Abigia came to us through Mary VanderWall, a Calvin College instructor who was traveling in Ethiopia with Calvin nursing students. She saw Abigia, knew she had to be helped, and thought of us.

Some children capture everyone's hearts. Abigia's escort on both of her Ethiopia/U.S. journeys was Lufthansa agent and Airline Ambassador Ingrid Casey. She wrote, "I just wanted to say what a lovely experience this was. I probably got more out of it than Abigia did. She is very independent and doesn't want any help when she is eating or putting on her shoes—or pulling a diaper out of her bag as if to say, 'It's time.' She wanted to explore and wave at everyone. On the flight back she was the darling of the flight crew and the other passengers, especially other children."

Dr. Stanley O. Skarli operated on Abigia at Helen DeVos Children's Hospital, removing two tethers from her spinal cord. Now Abigia will have a chance to grow straight and tall.

Abigia was Kent and Bonnie Huyser's first Healing the Children guest at their home in Kentwood. Bonnie says she was "a little thing, with big eyes; a happy girl. She was a little timid at first, and did not enjoy her ride in the car seat on our way home from the airport in Detroit. But she improved every day, and when the kids [Alyssa, 15, Travis, 13, and Emma, 11] came home from school every day she was delighted." Bonnie continues, "It's amazing how fast your heart falls in love with these children. Life goes on in your own family, and you just absorb them into your life."

"This child was the most engaging ever."



Abigia and the Huyser kids



Three happy Abigias

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
Holland.....Rachelle Oppenhuizen.....616-396-9743
Kalamazoo.....Sharon Boyle.....269-623-3500
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

Ana Matters

Clubbed feet are a condition almost always easily corrected in this country. The same is not true in many other places. In Honduras, Ana Gonzales-Rosales, age almost-four, could not get the help she needed. Our international partner in Honduras, Dr. Sheree Lynch, saw her and arranged for her to come to Michigan. But there was a hitch. Ana's parents were reluctant to let her go—so apprehensive that they withdrew their permission for her trip.

Enter super-host-mom Laura Cassel, who with her husband Scott had already welcomed four HTC kids into her home and happened to be in Honduras delivering books to a school and visiting one of her former charges, Yissely Diaz. We arranged for Laura to meet with and reassure Ana's loving parents. They were also able to spend time with Yissely and see that she had returned to Honduras safe and sound.

Here is the rest of the story, in Laura's words.



Ana all smiles



Recovering with Dora the Explorer



With host mom Laura



Look at my new shoes

*T*wo weeks later Ana arrived in the U.S., with her contagious smile. I knew then that hosting a fifth child was going to be as special as the first.

On April 22, Ana was in surgery for three hours at William Beaumont Hospital. Dr. Ira Zaltz, a pediatric orthopedic surgeon, did the procedure. We were back home after only one day in the hospital. Now it was time to wait. Clubbed foot surgery requires a child to be in a cast for a long time. And in order for the outcome to be perfected, Ana had to return to the hospital as an outpatient every week for four weeks so that her feet could be straightened a little more each time. This was hard on Ana. Dr. Zaltz explained to me that this type of bone manipulation is the most painful ever. We got through it with the distraction of dolls, Dora the Explorer, and lots of snuggle time.

We finally got the last set of casts on. They were walking casts, and after a while Ana was off and running/walking and able to play as any three-year-old would. A bicycle became her favorite outdoor toy, and we spent many hours riding around the driveway.

Oh, to look at the world through the eyes of a three-year-old! I highly recommend it! The days seem sunnier, the flowers more enchanting; and planes going by overhead present an opportunity to always look up.

After almost three long months, the day finally came for the casts to be removed. This meant many things for Ana—her first pair of shoes, her first bath in three months, and most important, her first glimpse of what it would be like to be normal for the rest of her life.

For me it meant that she would be going home. One invests so much time in these children that this is always a hard stage for me. As happy as I am to get back to my life, I am forever changed by them. Somehow they

put everything into perspective. Life matters, caring matters, love matters, and we have a chance to make them realize that . . . they matter.

Ana left on July 15, just in time to be home for her fourth birthday.



With Airline Ambassador escort Marielle Moise



What Matters in Colombia

Our Colombian medical teams are so faithful. They return again and again to the cities where they've found so much need: Bucaramanga, Villavicencio, and Ibague. There, they perform oral maxillo-facial surgery, repairing cleft lips and palates, and also do some burn scar repair. Countless children owe their health and even their lives to these doctors, nurses, and technicians who use their time off and usually pay their own expenses to take part in our healing missions (and usually feel they've received much more than they've given). We also want to salute SmileTrain for their frequent collaboration on these trips.

They hurt. They matter. We care. We'll help.

These are the steadfast members of our six Colombia 2007-08 medical teams: *surgeons* Dr. Bruce MacIntosh, Dr. Larry Herman, Dr. Bill Dobbin, Dr. Reinaldo Claudio, Dr. Byron Henry, Dr. Sara Runnels, Dr. Roy Hawkinson, Dr. Jim Bertz; *anesthesiologists and anesthetists* Dr. Ann Bartlett, Steve Cohen, Cis Tighe, Christine Velarde, Dr. Martin Ruiz, Dr. Kris Ferguson, Dr. Zenaida Espino-Ostman; *residents* Dr. Petros Panagos, Dr. Frank Farbod, Dr. Shant Baran, Dr. Carolyn Dicus, Dr. Patrick Edmunds, Dr. Sameer Nitin Hate, Dr. Bill Hajiharis, Dr. Emily Greenbowe; *dental students* James Ruckman, Wael Youseff; *nurses and technicians* Katherine Naranjo, Peggy Penny, Marjorie Hunter, Susan Cardona, Kerri Coakley, Kathleen Conroy, Helen Runnels, Shirley Blodgett, Karen Szubelak, R.J. Stager, Kathleen Smietana, Susan Bauer, Matthew Bayley, Heather Horan, Lilian Toth; *administrators and translators* Clemencia Echeverri, Camilo Arguello, Emmanuel Claudio, Mauricio Arguello, Erik Herman.

