

*We Received a Warm Welcome . . .*



... as you can see in this photo of children in Yamaranguila, Honduras, showing their appreciation for our medical-dental-construction team. Read their story on pages 3-4.



**Healing  
the  
Children®**

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# The Healing Heartline

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## *“The Power of Healing and the Power of Helping” Our Ninth Trip to Villavicencio, Colombia*

*Early winter 2005 saw an HTC medical team set out for Villavicencio, Colombia, for the ninth time. The teams always do wonderful work there, and their reports are always inspiring.*

*For Villavicencio 2005 we're bringing you an account from a unique and revealing point of view. Erik Herman, son of Dr. Larry Herman (veteran of all our Villavicencio trips) accompanied this year's team as an aide. Read his words and see the work of Healing the Children from a new perspective—just as Erik did.*

I had heard about these trips for years: Ecuador, Nepal, Samoa, Peru, India, Pakistan. My father had traveled the world performing his trade. I had seen the pictures. I had listened to the lectures. I had the trinkets, the t-shirts, the bracelets, the bowls. I often talked to friends about these trips as if I had some firsthand, expert knowledge. I urged them to go. I said I could help arrange it. But I always felt a bit like a fraud. I had never been on a trip. I knew I was as much an outsider as they were.

This year, that changed, for whatever reason. The collective enthusiasm of all the people I know who'd made the trip reached critical mass . . . I began dating a girl of Colombian descent and got to know her family . . . at any rate, I decided to go.

I've been around medicine my whole life (my father is an oral surgeon and physician, my sister is a nurse, my brother is studying to be an oral surgeon, and my girlfriend is also a nurse), but I've always worn my detachment from that part of my family as a badge of honor. It's been a long-running family joke that I get freaked out if I'm even in the vicinity of a hospital. I had to overcome feelings that I'd be in the way or somehow screw things up on a medical trip. I eventu-

ally came to learn that this sort of uncertainty is part of what makes these trips so special. The medical trip experience is outside of most volunteers' comfort zones—including the doctors and nurses who spend their everyday lives working in medicine. Colombia can be a dangerous and intimidating place. South American hospitals can be antiquated and under-equipped. The children are in overwhelming need of help. Any one of these reasons could keep someone from going. But people go there, cope with the problems, and offer the help. And they do great things.

I saw those great things manifested in my father, and Dr. Mac, and Dr. Bertz, and Clemencia, and Peggy. Each member of the group approached the work and the experience with the desire to help as motivating energy. You need to have this compulsion somewhere inside you or you won't even get on the plane. You need to have the confidence that you can make a difference; that your time and effort will create a whole lot of good.

Before I went, although I certainly hoped I could help in some way, my primary motivations were self-serving. I wanted to

travel. I wanted to take pictures in Colombia. I wanted to have an experience that I could write about later, an experience that would make me unique. Then we arrived in Villavicencio and were greeted by throngs of cheering parents and children, and I was moved to tears. They were welcoming us as if we were liberators, as if we were Simon Bolivar himself. Obviously, this trip was not about me and my motivations, selfish or generous. It was about the larger good of humans helping humans. It was about the healing spirit that transcends culture and language.



*Erik, Larry, and Kurt Herman*

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*1 / Changing the world, one child at a time*



*“The Power of Healing” cont’d from p. 1*

Cleft palates and cleft lips, the conditions our team had come to repair, are physical deformities developed prior to birth. The causes are environment, nutrition, and genetics. The deformities are often grossly disfiguring, and in a country like Colombia, where there is so much emphasis on physical beauty, cleft lip and palate children often face social ostracism as well as extreme health risks. These lovely children smile at you, almost unaware of their deformity, and their innocence just cuts deep. It makes the post-surgery transformation all the more amazing and joyful.

I’ve known for a long time that my father is a talented man. People have told me this. I’ve seen his awards and accolades. I’ve heard stories about the work he does and plans to do. But I’ve never really experienced it firsthand, partly because I don’t work in medicine and partly because I’ve intentionally maintained a distance between us. It’s a natural instinct for a son to want to surpass his father, and I think if I truly contemplated who my father is and what he’s accomplished it might stifle my desire to do that—or at least to define and achieve my own success. But to finally see him work in an environment he loves so much and where his talent and compassion are fully revealed was remarkable. I was awestruck by everything from the steadiness of his hands to the calmness and clarity in the way he taught new surgeons and residents. But even more, I was moved by the way he welcomed me to the operating room for the first time. On the first day of surgeries, one of the nurses saw me awkwardly wandering around and fiddling with my camera. She asked whether I would like to go in and take some pictures. I hesitantly said yes, and she led me through the heavy metal doors. I stood motionless for several seconds, truly expecting to see organs and entrails. My father looked up and said, “Hey, Erik, come over.” He eagerly explained the procedure he was doing and the techniques he was using. I could see the enjoyment in his eyes as he shared his skill with me. I wasn’t learning how to perform surgery, but I was learning about the power of healing and the power of helping. He was proud to pass along that energy.

When you go to a country like Colombia and you see how desperate the people are for help, it wakes you up a bit. Your self-imposed blinders are

*Continued on page 3*



# Kevin

*K*evin Garcia of El Salvador was just a tiny baby, only three months old, when he arrived in Michigan for surgery on his eyes. He was born with detached retinas, so he was blind.

At William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Dr. Kimberly Drenser, a retinal specialist, was able to reattach the retina in Kevin’s right eye. This means he will have light perception; he will see shadows and possibly large objects. It will be the difference between being blind and getting around by himself.

Kevin’s host family was Robert and Margaret Padalino and their children, of Grosse Pointe Woods. “Kevin was the cutest little bundle of joy,” Margaret says, “with his huge chubby cheeks and his hair that was constantly sticking straight out.”

We always ask our host families what makes their story special. Margaret provides a perfect answer: “I think that what makes Kevin’s story so special is what makes all of our children’s stories so special. We loved him and received so much love in return.”



*Kevin with escort Marie Arroyo and host dad Bob Padalino*

# Yinka

*I*n certain situations, HTC uses its resources to assist children here in the United States. Adeyinka Ifaturoti’s story is an example of a “domestic assist.”

In 2004, when Adeyinka was 12, he and his father and mother, Joseph and Toyin, and his brothers and sister immigrated to Michigan from Nigeria. While at school in Nigeria, Adeyinka had been accidentally poked in the eye with the point of a mathematical compass. A pharmacist had given him some eye drops, but no doctor had seen the injury. A traumatic cataract developed, and Adeyinka had almost no vision in the eye. When he arrived here in Michigan, HTC was asked to help the family, since they had no car and no health insurance. Steve and Nancy Van Noord, an experienced host family, agreed to drive Adeyinka to his medical appointments as well as help mentor the family through the process and orient them to their new life in Michigan.

Dr. Patrick Droste performed surgery on Yinka’s eye at DeVos Children’s Hospital in Grand Rapids to remove the cataract and insert a lens that would restore his vision, but after two days the lens was displaced. Dr. Alan Margherio removed the lens surgically, and when the eye healed, Dr. Robert Peters fitted Yinka for a contact lens. He is building up to wearing the lens full time, and with it his vision is 20/20.

The family is so grateful to HTC and all the doctors and staff who helped Yinka get to this point. He is a sophomore at East Kentwood High School and is on the honor roll. He hopes to be a doctor someday.



*Yinka with Dr. Droste*



*This year we lost two very special members of our HTC family: Lloyd Gunther, host grandpa to many and father of Carole Pettijohn (who with her husband Bob has hosted 8 HTC kids since 1993) and Louise DeKock, host grandma to many and mother of Al DeKock (who with his wife Ruth has hosted 8 HTC kids since 1994). Both families named HTC as a beneficiary for memorial donations, so that even more children will be healed in their names. We’re very grateful.*

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*What a fun day! Our 16<sup>th</sup> annual golf outing was a great success, and we owe it to our generous and loyal sponsors: Iserv, Moore & Bruggink, Oliver Products, John Bouws, D.D.S., Oppenhuizen Orthodontics, Wilber & Townshend, and Dolphin Travel. Special thanks, too, to our tee and green sponsors, our golfers, and all of our volunteers. Let's do it again next year! Save the date: June 25, 2007*

## Faith

So much sadness in a little life. When Faith Fayette of Nigeria was six years old, her mother was killed in an automobile accident. Faith's lower limbs were severely burned, and she was left with malformed feet and toes. She could not wear shoes, and she could not walk any kind of distance. Faith's father managed to make contact with HTC, and he asked us to help his daughter.

We did. At Shriners Hospital for Children in Cincinnati, Dr. Richard Kagan straightened Faith's toes and released the burn contractures at the back of her left knee by grafting skin from her right thigh. The results were wonderful: Faith can now wear all kinds of shoes and walk—even run—substantial distances.

Faith's host family was Paul and Jan Schumacher of Wilmington, Ohio, and their children. Jan says Faith was a typical ten-year-old—she loved dolls and jewelry and emphatically preferred *her* food (“fried or baked chicken, rice or noodles, coleslaw, apples, and carrots—nothing else!”). She had a hard time adjusting to her temporary home, crying for her family and worrying about her father and three brothers back in Nigeria. “But the last week, when she knew she was going home,” Jan says, “she tried smoked beef, the computer, and the cell phone, and tried to persuade the kids I was going with her when she left.”

Faith went home in a very cool pair of new black tennis shoes!



*Faith and a special friend*

## Luis

Luis Hernandez of the Dominican Republic was born with two clubbed feet. If they had been left untreated he might have been confined to a wheelchair when he grew up.

He was seven years old when he came to Michigan for life-changing surgery. At Holland Hospital, Dr. Francis Harton repaired his feet, with perfect results. Luis now walks on the soles of his feet, not his ankles, and he can wear shoes for the first time in his life.

Doug and Jane Bouman and their children, of Holland, were Luis's host family. “We were amazed at Luis's emotional and physical strength,” Jane says. “He endured tremendous pain and handled it very well; he needed much less time to recover than the doctors had thought he would. Luis loves to be on the go! He's always exploring, and he loves sports. We know the surgery will benefit him greatly. We could never imagine him in a wheelchair; being mobile is so much a part of who he is.”



*Luis and Dr. Harton, before surgery*

## Healing for Lesman

Cara Burke, of Springboro, Ohio, is a Healing the Children veteran at age 17. Her mom Lisa is an HTC coordinator in the Cincinnati area, where the family, which also includes dad Kevin and Lindsay, Anna, and Caleb, has hosted five HTC kids. That includes Lesman Jordan, age eight, of Honduras, about whom Cara wrote this essay. Lesman's surgery was done by Dr. Kevin Yakuboff and Dr. Richard Kagan at Shriners Hospital for Children in Cincinnati.

It was the first time Lesman Jordan had helped his father make the Christmas fireworks in Honduras. As he fetched materials, his father packed sour-smelling powders into ornate shafts, sealing them tightly. When one rocket was ready to test, Lesman noticed that a pile of gray powder had spilled on the ground, and he shouted a warning too late. His father, match in hand, lit the fuse, then disappeared into flames. In a flash, Lesman's life changed forever.

Covered with third-degree burns, Lesman came to know a small, crowded Honduran hospital as home. When his burns remained raw and tender for over three months, a team comprised of the First Lady of Honduras, the Ruth Paz Foundation, Healing the Children, and Shriners Burns Hospital cooperated to bring him to the United States for treatment. In Honduras, Lesman lived near a waste dump on a river; the only airplane he had ever seen was a filthy, discarded toy rescued from the garbage. Now, looking out the window of a small, chartered jet, he parted company with his mother Maria and the rugged jungles of his homeland.

While Lesman was traveling to the United States, I was returning, rank and mosquito-bitten, from a rugged canoe trip in Canada. When I arrived at home, my family presented me with a passport photo of a young boy's lean, grave face. With his serious expression, he appeared nearer age thirteen than eight.

But when I saw him standing on our front porch a little later, his countenance proved anything but grave. With a gleeful, toothless smile, Lesman greeted me for the first time with a genial embrace, his delicate figure nearly disappearing into my arms.

Lesman requires two hours of physical therapy every day. First, my younger brother and sister, nicknamed the “cream team,” massage

greasy ointment over his joints to prevent dry flakes and itching. Next, I share the duties of the “mean team,” plying Lesman's wrists 90 degrees to maintain range of motion. I must also comfort his intermittent sobbing, “Ai ai ai ai.” He accepts my sympathy with tear-stained brown cheeks and quivering elfin lips. After the ordeal of therapy, soft, smiling sparks of resilience return to his eyes.

Lesman loves to clean dinner dishes and afterward splash in the gray, tepid water. He spreads a soapy white beard on his slender face, flanked by russet ears, and sounds a high-pitched, slightly nasal giggle. The two of us begin a raucous, merry song of “La Cucaracha,” including the new verses Lesman has taught me.

When Lesman returns home to Honduras, his memory will reside in oily fingerprints on our burgundy kitchen wall. For over a decade, he will travel between two different worlds: life in Honduras, his house by the river dump, and the squalid hospital; and visits to America, our sloping lawn, and pristine hospital hallways. The measure of a society is how it treats its weakest members. As part of a team, along with the Honduran First Lady, the Ruth Paz Foundation, Healing the Children, and Shriners Burns Hospital, our family has taken a weak member, Lesman Jordan, and made him strong again.



*Lesman (right) with Caleb*



*Lesman with Kevin Burke and Caleb*

### “The Power of Healing” cont'd from p. 2



lifted. Sometimes you learn how to help. Sometimes just being a witness is helping. You become a conduit for the helping spirit. And the experience makes your life better and enriches you as a person.

*Team members: Dr. Bruce MacIntosh, Dr. Larry Herman, Dr. Bill Dobbins, Dr. Reinaldo Claudio, Dr. Sara Runnels, Dr. Byron Henry, Dr. Jim Bertz, Dr. Roy Hawkinson, Dr. John Stanley, Dr. Martin Ruiz; anesthetists Steve Cohen, Cis Tighe, Toni Schmittling, Karen Opaka-Masser; nurses Peggy Penny, Marjorie Hunter, Helen Runnels, Shirley Blodgett, Cindy Jones; techs R. J. Stager, Patricia Batzdorf; aides Kurt Herman, Erik Herman; administrator and translator Clemencia Echeverri*

# Healing and Building in Honduras



The work of healing the children is an ongoing lesson in serendipity. Isn't it amazing how things can simply fall into place sometimes? For example, consider the following story.

One day, Carole Pettijohn, the Director of Outreach at Ivanrest Christian Reformed Church (which is a very generous HTC supporter), called Helen Salan, Executive Director of Healing the Children MI-OH. Carole wanted to let Helen know that a number of people at Ivanrest were eager to be more involved in HTC's work, in any way they could.

Carole and Helen discussed a number of ideas and eventually came up with a new concept: a combined medical, dental, and construction team that would undertake a working trip to Honduras. When Helen hung up she immediately called HTC's Honduras liaison, Dr. Lilia Larios, who, amazingly enough, was right there in her office and had just been talking with her husband and her assistant about a town called Yamaranguila where there was a great need for medical and dental care . . . and an orphanage.

Needless, to say, Dr. Larios was stunned that Helen had called at just that moment. Things were simply falling into place. (You could call it serendipity.)

A team came together, about evenly divided between medical and dental professionals and builders, and several months later they found themselves on a truck headed into the Honduran mountains toward Yamaranguila. Carole Pettijohn, who served as team director, says, "Little did we know then that the place would soon become so dear to us, and that we were driving past the homes of people who would become dear friends."

The building team threw themselves into the construction of a large complex, already near completion, that would serve as a boys' orphanage. Electrical work, plumbing, hauling, sweeping, measuring, painting, laying countertops—they did it all.

Meanwhile, the dental and medical teams set up their equipment and assigned roles to all the willing helpers. Then they were ready to see the children. Would they come? On the first day the teams evaluated and/or treated only 34 dental patients and 130 medical patients. But by the end of the week the numbers were 227 dental patients and 703 medical patients . . . 930 gifts of healing.

At the end of the trip, Carole says, "There was surely a sense of happiness and satisfaction for all of us. We had accomplished a lot over the past five days, we had made some really good friends, and we had definitely laughed and cried together as a team. Thank you, Yamaranguila!"

*Team members: Carole Pettijohn, team director; Dr. Bert Pierce, Dr. James Eldersveld, Dr. Rebecca Bultman; nurse practitioner Kristie Buchholz; dental assistant Rachel Ten Harmsel; nurses Marilyn Boven, Michelle Gulker, and Kristine Sutton; construction crew Bob Pettijohn, Ron Boven, Tim Mullenburg, Doug Gulker, Bob Buchholz, Bob Bruggink, Jon Lawrence, and Doreen Lawrence; translators Jane Bruggink and Amy Lynn Door.*

