

From Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Just one week ago, several members of our staff and three Board members returned from a very eventful trip to Guatemala. Through dust, a flat tire, rain, and hail, our entire group cheerfully persevered because we were so humbled by the incredible dedication of the staff of Curamericas Guatemala and impressed with their achievements. Our project area is located in the remote highlands of Guatemala with narrow, steep, unpaved roads. Their successes would be impressive on flat, paved roads, but to see how far they have progressed in spite of their challenges is truly amazing. The following are excerpts from the Board members' impressions of our trip:

I do not think that anyone who was not on the trip will ever be able to comprehend what this project is about or the problems that the Guatemala staff have to endure daily; the challenge for those of us who were there is to try to accurately relate what it is all about, and to try to figure out how it can be funded. They have used resources wisely, and have great results for the money spent!
Richard (Dick) Fox, II

After these drives, I was even more amazed by the women and men who travel these roads by foot, by chicken bus, or, if lucky, by motorcycle. And they do so no matter the weather and no matter how long it takes. I was so proud of them and yet they were so humble when praised. Yes, they brought tears to my eyes and touched my heart and soul.
Linda Velonis

I was very impressed with the progress the Guatemala project has made in so little time against such geographic barriers. Curamericas International can be quite proud of the work that has been done there.
Wes Jones, M.D.

One of my favorite "moments" from this trip was when we sat in on a training with a group of mid-wives in Santo Domingo. Two years ago when I was in the same district observing one of these meetings, there were only about four women present and they were so shy and scared that there wasn't much interaction. This time, there was a group of about 15 women who had walked, on average, three hours each way on mountainous roads to attend. They were engaged, participating, and they asked our team questions to make sure they were getting correct messages from their instructors. Talk about empowering!

I wish each of you could experience the joy and gratitude of the people in our project areas in Guatemala and Bolivia. We are saving and changing lives and we could not do it without your help. Please keep Curamericas and our partners in your prayers and in your plans for support and we promise to keep using your gifts wisely to help those that need us most. I hope you have a wonderful summer.

Saludos,

Jessa

Letting Her Fight Shine - Thank You, Martha!



Curamericas would like to thank Martha Thompson for her years of dedicated service and commitment to our organization and the people we serve. Martha served on the Board of Directors for ARHC, now Curamericas, from 1998 to 2000. While on the Board, she participated in a team in Ambana, Bolivia and took the first work team from our organization to Haiti in 1999. Every year since 2000, she has represented Curamericas at the South Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. She provided the initiative and continued leadership in her local church, Union United Methodist Church, for regular contributions to Curamericas. Her church continues to offer financial support to Curamericas, helping to prevent unnecessary illness and suffering for many women and children in Bolivia and Guatemala. We are so fortunate to have such a beautiful and humble soul working on our behalf.



(Above) The group stops for a moment amid the Mayan ruins in Guatemala. From right: Alma Dominguez with Stephanie, Dick Fox, Gladys Shanklin, Cathy Ward, Falesha Houston, Linda Velonis, Teresa Wolf, Wes Jones, Rachel LaBruyere. (Below) Diego and Dick Fox at a workshop



Ways You Can Help

- Donate airfare or frequent flyer miles for travel to project sites to strengthen technical assistance.
- Can you, or someone you know, procure advertising space in your local newspaper for work team recruitment?
- Interested in a group project but can't travel? Contact the Curamericas' office about assembling simple safe birth kits for our health workers and midwives.
- Organize an event in your community, church, or workplace. A representative from Curamericas will be happy to attend and give a presentation about our programs.
- Volunteer to travel to Bolivia or Guatemala with a medical or construction team.
- Summer has traditionally been a challenging period for fundraising. Please consider sending a cash donation this summer to help us through the "donor vacation months."

For more information on how you can help, please contact our office at 919-821-8000.

Please Note: Curamericas' U.S. office will be moving locations June 28th. The address and phone number will be:
 2245 North Hills Drive, Suite E
 Raleigh, NC 27612
 919-510-8787



curamericas
 Hope Through Health

224 E. Martin St.
 Raleigh, NC 27601
 919-821-8000

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Photos by Cathy Wolf

Diego sits quietly while his mother attends a Curamericas training session for mid-wives in Santo Domingo, Guatemala

Welcome Back!

Curamericas is delighted to welcome two prior members to our Board of Directors.



Henry Perry, MD, PhD, MPH: As the Founder of Andean Rural Health Care (ARHC), which later became Curamericas, we are extremely fortunate to have Dr. Perry on our Board. After starting and working for ARHC for many years, Henry went on to take the lessons learned in our project in Bolivia and share them with other organizations throughout the world. He worked in maternal and child health in Bangladesh and then with the Hospital Albert Schweitzer in Haiti before returning to the United States where he is now the Carl Taylor Professor for Equity and Empowerment and Technical Advisor for Future Generations in Franklin, West Virginia. Even though Henry was officially working for other organizations since leaving ARHC in 1995, he continued to guide and advise Curamericas throughout the years. In addition to joining the Board, he has accepted the Board's offer to serve as Chair of Curamericas' Program Advisory Committee. We at Curamericas welcome Henry back to our Board and look forward to his guidance as we continue to build on his dream. Welcome home, Henry!

Dr. Perry in Guatemala

J. Wes Jones, MD, FACP, AGAF: Years ago, Karen Barkman handed Wes a brochure about ARHC's work in Bolivia. As Wes tells the story, he felt a huge surge of energy, like 150 volts of electricity. Very reluctantly Wes answered God's call to go, and now, 20 years later, Wes Jones still leads annual joint medical and construction teams to Bolivia. There have been over 250 team participants since his first trip in 1987. Well over \$2 million in donated medical supplies have been taken on his trips and countless lives have been touched. Dr. Jones served on the ARHC board of directors from 1988 to 1997, and he is the single largest individual Curamericas donor—his personal gifts now total over \$1.5 million!



Dr. Jones with Gabriella, a young girl who sells crafts with her mother Ruth in Guatemala.

Why I Volunteer: Dr. Rick Reifenberg's Story



Dr. Reifenberg with a patient in Montero on his recent trip in January 2006

In my final year of residency in Internal Medicine/Pediatrics at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis, I was asked to join a group of college students from DePauw University as the team physician for a medical mission trip going to Montero, Bolivia. Little did I know when I accepted, that six years later I would have made annual trips every January since and that it would have changed and enriched my life forever. It was in January 2000 when I went on my first ever overseas medical trip. Not having any idea what to expect, I set off on an adventure that to this day is thrilling, invigorating, and exhausting every time I go. Montero is located in the flatlands of eastern Bolivia, which is the poorest country in South America. Similar in climate and appearance to central Florida, I left a very cold and snowy Indiana to arrive overnight in a hot, humid environment in the middle of their summer. Once I got used to the fact that luxuries like air conditioning, ice, and cars with seat belts were going to be in short supply, I had the chance to be fully immersed in a new culture for the first time. After initially working solo in the main clinic at Villa Cochabamba for 2 weeks with no resources other than a few sample medications our team had brought, I would never have imagined that years later my team would have grown to include myself, four other physicians, an administrative coordinator and thousands of dollars worth of donated medicine and funds just to use for patient care! I am grateful and humbled by the response other physicians, family, and friends have given this project both in terms of emotional time and financial support. During the 2 weeks that we were in Montero this last January, our team was able to see about 400 primary care patients, both children and adults, with an additional 50 OB/Gyn visits and procedures. With the help of countless friends, family, committed professionals, and even unknown donors, our small group has come a long way in six years – we look forward to our annual January trip and hope it will continue to grow and prosper for years to come.

Bolivia Project Spotlight

Irma Condori is the new Field Program Manager for Curamericas' Child Survival project at CSRA (Consejo de Salud Rural Andino) in Bolivia. She is a very accomplished woman who has been a medical doctor for many years, has a Masters in Public Health, and a Masters in Public Management. She speaks Aymara, Spanish, and English. Dr. Condori directed the Frank S. Beck clinic in Ancoraimes, Bolivia prior to assuming her current position.

Like Bolivia, Irma has a strength that will endure. When she was seven, her father passed away leaving Irma, her mother and sister behind. Despite economic hardships, she persevered and studied to become a doctor with a goal of improving Bolivia's health care system.

Dr. Irma Condori



As a professional woman in Latin America, Irma also had to face another barrier. When she first started working in Ancoraimes, the authorities did not want to take a woman seriously. Irma responded with hard work. By showing results and improvements in the health system, she was able to gain the trust and respect of the people in Ancoraimes. Curamericas is proud to have such a dedicated and accomplished woman to lead the Child Survival project.

Thefront of the clinic in Senkata, Bolivia.

Photo by Gladys Shanklin

Guatemala Project Spotlight.....



Alma Dominguez is the Supervising Nurse of the Curamericas Guatemala Project, helping Dr. Mario Valdez to oversee the entire project. Alma is 28 years old and is the mother of three children, the youngest of whom is three months old. Alma is from the village (pueblo) of Santa Ana Huista in the Department of Huehuetenango, Guatemala. She has worked for our project for five years and she is deeply respected by her co-workers.

(Right) Alma and Stephanie in front of the office in San Miguel Acatan, Guatemala. (Below) Children outside of a mid-wives workshop in Santo Domingo, Guatemala.

Photos courtesy of Cathy Ward

Alma is a remarkably dedicated young woman. Since there are no roads into her village in the mountains of Guatemala, each Monday morning Alma wakes at 3:00 a.m. and leaves her two oldest children with her sister for the week. With Stephanie, the baby, tied to her with a hand woven blanket, Alma begins her four-hour walk to get to work by 8:00 a.m. During the week, Alma lives in a house rented by Curamericas Guatemala for the health care workers who live too far away to commute. When asked why she is so dedicated to our project, she quietly shares how her mother died in childbirth when she was 14 years old and Alma became the mother to her two siblings, ages three and five. She is dedicating her life to improving the health, education, and societal situation for the women of Guatemala. Alma's leadership is largely responsible for the success of the program and she is a true example of the spirit of the Curamericas Guatemala team.



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