

PANAMA MISSIONS

UPDATE FALL 2017

Summer Mission Efforts Involve Medical, Evangelism and ‘Caring’

The Clinic of Hope in Sanson was in “full service mode” in June when a dedicated team of medical, evangelistic, VBS and humanitarian workers arrived to do as much good as could be done in a week’s time.

The Clinic of Hope, Panama Missions’ most ambitious project, is located near the end of the Pan-American Highway, almost to Colombia.

“We wanted to serve ‘the forgotten people of Panama,’ so we built the clinic adjacent to the church building in Sanson. Here, medical services are practically non-existent, the water is polluted, and the people are extremely poor,” explains Panama Missions Director, **Larry Brady**. “It’s the kind of place Jesus would visit.”

Equipped for medical, dental and pharmacy services, the facility also provides comfortable housing for visiting teams. **Baudilo Leon**, a licensed medical technician, is the fulltime worker, providing nurse level services and medications for minor and chronic conditions year-round.

Cookeville, Tenn., Church Takes Lead

Most of the June medical personnel were from the Collegeside Church of Christ, Cookeville, Tenn., whose minister, **Joe Roberts**, coordinated the effort. **Dr. Matt Bolton** was assisted by several nurse practitioners, registered nurses, and both a medical and a pharmacy student as they attended to the needs of more than 650 patients.



Four ladies from the Luverne and Salem (Ala.) churches of Christ conducted VBS programs at several area schools. **Margaret Penn**, an RN, gave the school children “wellness checks.”

Traveling teams also held clinics at the Santa Fe church building and at El Satio, a remote village accessible only by boat. A Panamanian dentist worked with the team two days in the Clinic of Hope.

Evangelism Results in Responses

Joe Roberts spent his time working with Sanson minister, **Luis Trojin**, visiting and evangelizing in the community. His realization that some people were not attending services because they did not have transportation led to a generous outpouring of funds from Collegeside church members to help purchase a vehicle to serve the Sanson church and the Clinic of Hope.

Roberts also taught evening programs on “Church Discipleship and Leadership.” Three responses on Sunday night and a baptism after the team left were encouraging.

Other team members worked on benevolent projects including providing concrete floors for two homes, installing water filters and distributing food. Approximately 60 water filters were installed in several villages.



The June medical team worked in the Clinic of Hope and at remote locations. Above: Mary Anne Oliver, Nurse Practitioner, is a veteran Panama Missions medical worker from Columbia, SC.

REFLECTIONS ON THE MISSION EXPERIENCE

Give, and it will be given (back) to you . . . and running over . . . “Luke 6:38

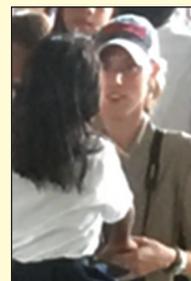
Here are a few comments from first timers on the team:



“If you have a tool, use it for Jesus,” was the heart of my lesson for my 5th and 6th grade Bible class shortly before I learned about the mission trip to Panama. As a school nurse, I had the time to go. Phil. 2:1-11 was speaking to me. What an amazing experience to be intensely focused on helping others. I want my life to matter.
Rebecca Strasser, R.N., Wynne, Ark.

Panama Missions was an incredibly humbling experience. This mission opened my eyes to a different way of life by trekking through the jungle, visiting remote villages, and fellowshiping in faith with new people.

Kara Reed of Nashville, Tenn., performs a wellness check on a school child.



Mary Jo Hoffman was part of the Luverne, Ala., VBS team and a general helper at the clinic. She was praised by others for her servant’s heart. “She made sure we never ran out of clean towels – or anything that we needed.” Mary Jo says she will “always remember the sweet children.”

'Pennies for Panama' Project Teaches a Great Lesson

Yati Chami turned an eleventh grade class assignment at Prattville Christian Academy into a mission project she dubbed "Pennies for Panama" that resulted in \$4,000 to help needy families in her home country of Panama. The best part of the story is that Yati was able to personally deliver groceries and other needed items to the selected 31 families as part of a mission team effort last June.

Yati, now 18 and a high school senior, left her parents and her Embera Indian culture in January, 2014, to live with Larry and Betsy Brady in Hope Hull, Ala., and attend Prattville Christian Academy. Yati mastered English in an amazingly short period of time and has become an honor student at PCA, setting her sights on a college degree in nursing.

Yati explains that the purpose of the "Design Thinking" class was to "help us find a passion for something, and to help us learn to brainstorm and work together for the good of others."

"I knew that I wanted to do something that would benefit the very poor in the Darien province, where I am from. It was exciting that my classmates offered great ideas to help me and even donated funds from their own projects to help mine," she adds.

"I won't get my final grade in the class until after I give my report this fall, but what I have learned about always being ready to give to others, is what means the most to me."

Yati with a lady she helped.



Yati Chami, (blue shirt) personally delivers bags of groceries to needy families in Panama, the result of "Pennies for Panama." A hug is a great reward.

DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Tools for Evangelism – the Holy Spirit and You

By Larry Brady

God uses each one of us to perform His work on earth. As we take the gospel message to Panama, we use a variety of approaches to get people to study the Bible with us. In my experience, the key lies in showing people how much we care for them – and how much Jesus cares for them.

A young mother, Odalis, agreed to study the Bible with us during the June campaign after Yati Chami took her family some basic food supplies. This needy family was among those chosen to receive the blessings of Yati's "Pennies for Panama" campaign (see adjacent article). We studied with Odalis several times before we left for home. We were thrilled to learn that she was baptized soon after we had departed.



Sometimes the "tool for evangelism" that we use is a water filter, or a cement floor, or an Operation Christmas Joy gift. We try to introduce the gospel to everyone who comes to one of our medical or dental clinics. We use every opportunity to take Bible-oriented programs into the public schools – where we are welcomed warmly.

The Holy Spirit guides each of us to carry out good works and to share the good news of Jesus Christ with all who will listen. Your participation in a campaign – either physical or financial – is greatly appreciated.

PANAMA MISSIONS 2017-18 SCHEDULE

- October 16** Deadline for Operation Christmas Joy Gifts to be in Montgomery, Ala.
- October 19-20** OCJ Truck Pickup
- November 4** Loading Day, OCJ Shipping Container
- December 4-16** Operation Christmas Joy Trip
- Jan. 26 - Feb. 4** Denver Vision/Medical Team Trip
- Feb. 2 - 10** Long Beach, Miss. Medical Team Trip

For more details, contact Larry Brady, Director

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New Website: panamamissions.net

Children's Efforts Add Special Touch to Operation Christmas Joy

Children LOVE Operation Christmas Joy – on both the *giving* and the *receiving* ends of the project.

It is encouraging to share stories of children in the United States who make special efforts to send JOY to less fortunate children in Panama.

For the third year, **Quinn Clark**, 13, of Highland, Michigan, has led an effort to provide an exceptional number of Christmas shoebox gifts for Operation Christmas Joy.



Quinn Clark delivers gifts to Montgomery.

In early August, Quinn arrived in Montgomery with her grandparents, John and Rita Clark, to deliver 191 shoebox gifts for the 2017 shipment.

That brings her three-year total to 534!

The first year, 2015, Quinn assembled 103 gifts almost single handedly - shopping garage sales, internet sites and thrift stores. In 2016 her home congregation, the Waterford Church of Christ, and some others began helping her, but Quinn admits to “checking and adjusting each gift as needed” to meet her high standards. This year she still made about 60 gifts all by herself.

The most exciting news for Quinn is that she and her dad, Jeff, will be making the December trip to Panama to help Larry Brady distribute the gifts – her dream come true!

Three years ago, Quinn and her dad searched the internet for a Christmas shoebox program sponsored within churches of Christ. Their search turned up the Panama Missions website with information about Operation Christmas Joy, giving Quinn exactly what she was looking for!



Callista “Cat” Furr is a 9 year old fourth grader in Crestview, Fla., and a talented artist like her art teacher mom, Jennifer Furr. Cat has heard a lot about Panama from her grandfather, J.W. Furr, (Papa J to her) who has made more mission trips to Panama than he can count!

So when “Ms. Monte” Meredith, the Operation Christmas Joy coordinator for the Airport Road Church of Christ where she attends, asked her to paint designs on ball caps for Christmas shoebox gifts,



A few “Cat Hats.”

she was pretty excited to help. Her response, “I love the idea of the children having hats that are not plain.”

Cadie Norman is a tender hearted five year old who loved and admired Lillian Vaughn, an elderly lady from the Liberty Church of Christ, who has filled hundreds of Christmas Joy shoeboxes and collected thousands of stuffed animals for the children of Panama since the program began in 2001.

When Miss Lillian passed away last August at age 93, Cadie expressed concern: “Who is going to send stuffed animals to Panama?” Her mother, Courtney, told her, “You can do it if you want to,” and proceeded to help her with the effort.



Cadie cuddles collected animals.

So far Cadie has collected more than 400 stuffed animals for this year’s program, including 380 Beanie Babies purchased at one flea market.

Some are being included in gifts assembled at the Liberty Church of Christ where she attends. Others have been shared with the Ramer Church of Christ where her grandparents, Knox and Pat Norman, are active in the program.

All of the soft creatures will find their way into the arms of children in Panama this Christmas!

OPERATION CHRISTMAS JOY 2017 OPPORTUNITIES

In early November, a fully-loaded tractor/trailer shipping container will leave Montgomery, Ala., for Savannah, Ga., where it will begin its ocean journey to Panama filled with approximately 7,000 Christmas gifts for the children of Panama.

With fall approaching, Operation Christmas Joy is in full swing at some 75-80 churches of Christ from as far away as Michigan, Nebraska, Maryland and Colorado. Of course the majority of participants are from Alabama and surrounding states. Gifts must be completed and delivered to Montgomery by October 20.

It isn't too late for individuals and congregations to get involved. For complete details, please visit the website, panamamissions.net, or contact Sara Bills, Coordinator, at saratoga4000@gmail.com or 334-260-0175.



**Fill a Box –
Touch a Child**

Goal is for Panama Congregations to be More Self-Sustaining

Although many of the Churches of Christ in Panama are small and located in difficult places, Panama Missions currently has relationships with 12 congregations, including four that were established by evangelistic efforts.

“When a congregation of the Lord’s church helps to plant and support another congregation in Panama, we feel that we are making important steps forward. The church in **Santiago** has done just that in the nearby community of **Sona**, which was impacted by a U.S. medical team several years ago,” comments Larry Brady, director.

Santiago, located 3 hours west of Panama City, has enjoyed stability and growth under the support of the Luverne, Ala., church and the leadership of minister, **Julian Miranda**, a graduate of the Honduras based Baxter Institute.

Medical and humanitarian mission teams have had an impact in Panama, and congregations have been formed from their efforts. “I am especially grateful for the dedication of men such as **J.W. Furr** and **John Henry**. J.W. travels with me just about every time I go to Panama, and John Henry and wife, Barbara, are living in Panama up to six months at a stretch. John preaches, conducts seminars, holds home Bible studies and helps with building projects.”

Platanilla, west of Torti, **Meteti**, and **El Tiroa** have new buildings, thanks to the generosity of churches and individuals in the U.S. The churches in **Santa Fe**, **Sanson** and **Torti** also have new roofs, as well as upgraded electrical work and ceiling fans.

Sanson, home congregation to the Clinic of Hope, is thriving with minister, **Luis Trojin**. The Sanson building has been completely rebuilt and upgraded, serving the clinic and the community.

“Some of our congregations are becoming more self-sustaining, and better able to impact their communities. As our mission teams install water filters, improve homes, and provide food to the most needy, the local church participates and is recognized,” adds Larry.

“Our goal is to build up these churches, training members to share the Gospel with their neighbors – and to ‘give back’ some of the blessings they have received. We are thankful for congregations and individual Christians from throughout the United States that either go down periodically or send a donation to help us better support these Christians,” Larry concludes.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

By Larry Brady

June 3, 2017, I lost one of my closest personal friends in Panama.

Tom Ford was introduced to me by U.S. Ambassador Linda Watt who knew that we were kindred spirits. Tom lived most of his life in Panama and had dual American/Panamanian citizenship. He was a successful businessman, but more significantly he was an amazing humanitarian leader in Panama. Our shared love and concern for the people of Panama, especially the needs of children, locked us in a friendship I had hoped would never end, at least in my lifetime.

Tom was President of the Gift of Life Foundation, an organization that served children with severe medical problems. He also served on the Board of Directors of the Children’s Hospital and numerous other humanitarian organizations in Panama such as Healing the Children and the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Tom loved Operation Christmas Joy. He would make all of the arrangements for us at the various hospitals in Panama City. His passion was always “one more child.”

Tom kept politics out of what he did, but he was known by everyone in the political arenas, from the President and First Lady down. He would take me to the Presidential Palace to use his influence when I had a problem. We would be greeted with “How are you doing, Mr. Ford?” His answer was always, “I’m doing well, and I want you to meet my good friend and preacher, Larry Brady.” That was the way he did things. I felt greatly honored.

On numerous occasions he helped me smooth over things



Tom Ford always accompanied Santa (aka Larry Brady) around Children’s Hospital in Panama City, sometimes sporting a Patch Adams nose.

going through customs. There were also many times that I called Tom from the interior when I was working with a medical team from the U.S. There would be a child who needed a wheel chair, or immediate attention at the Children’s Hospital in Panama City. He would meet the parents at the hospital and guide them through the frightening experience. Sometimes I called from the U.S. and he would drop what he was doing to attend to some special needs child or a project we had ongoing.

Tom will be missed by all of us who had the privilege of knowing and working with him throughout the years. I was honored to be invited by his wife, Julee, to speak at his memorial service. He was 80, but still very active. His son, Scott, assured me that they would carry on some of the work that he found so dear, especially Panama Missions.