

Medical Services in Panama - More than "Numbers"

Dr. Russ Burcham is pleased to have accomplished more eye surgeries in 2020 than previous years. But it is obvious when you talk with him, that it is more than "numbers" that Dr. Burcham cares about.

For the past 21 years, Dr. Burcham, a Christian ophthalmologist from Denver, has led a volunteer vision team to Panama to perform cataract surgery and other procedures that can restore sight to individuals who have become blind from cataracts and other conditions, and who otherwise could not afford the needed medical care.

January 31 - February 7, a highly skilled and compassionate team of surgeons, nurses and other support staff traveled to Meteti, a small town in the Darien Province, one of the poorest regions of Panama, to host a vision and general medical clinic.

A total of 174 cataract surgeries and 75 pterygium surgeries were performed, while 650 had eye exams and some 1,600 were fitted for reading glasses.

Alongside the vision team, a **general medical team** saw about 1,300 patients, dispensing some 200,000 pills along with care for many chronic and acute conditions.

Dr. Burcham's comments: *It is humbling when people trust their eyes and their physical needs to our mission team. We see God's blessings in the results. We always encourage the people we touch to give God the glory and to seek a closer relationship with God through Jesus Christ.*

Family of Five Aided

Team members also donated funds to help a family of five living in the poorest conditions. A cement floor was poured and beds and bedding were provided for the children. Scholarship funds were also provided for Annabelle, 8, to attend school. "Prayers are being lifted that this family will make a decision for Christ soon," adds Larry Brady.



Annabelle, 8, is sleeping in a new bed and going to school, thanks to the generosity of the mission team. Concrete is being prepared for the dirt floor of her family's home, pictured in the background.



Dr. Burcham exams a patient the day after surgery. "Give God the glory" is always part of his "after care" instructions.



Smiles are an important part of medical mission care!

DATES TO REMEMBER

Saturday, June 27

Friends of Panama Missions Barbecue (see p. 1)

All Summer Trips to Panama Are Cancelled

October 15-16

Operation Christmas Joy Truck Pick Up

October 16

All OCJ Gifts Due in Montgomery

October 24

OCJ Container Loaded in Montgomery

December 7-19

Operation Christian Joy Trip

Panama Missions

Spring 2020 News Update

Clinic of Hope Enters Second Decade of Service

"Ten years in the tropics of Panama take a toll on any building," says Panama Missions director, **Larry Brady**, "but we are proud to say that the maintenance efforts that we have implemented over the years has the Clinic of Hope in Sanson improved in many ways and looking almost as good as new!"

A team of local church members and volunteers from the Sentafront Border Police worked with Larry Brady for a week in February, power washing the vinyl siding of the second floor, and scraping and repainting the lower level. Much of the interior was also painted. In past years, a team from the U.S. has made annual trips to Panama to perform upkeep and improvements.

Larry expresses appreciation to the **Scott Ford** family of Panama City, Panama, for donating a new, high powered pressure washer.

Builder, **Allen Gunn**, recorded on the power box at the Clinic of Hope that electricity was turned on April 9, 2009, almost eleven years ago.

Since that time, thousands of Panamanians have come through the doors for medical attention and have also received spiritual encouragement.



LIKE NEW! The Clinic of Hope is sparkling clean after a thorough power washing and painting in February. The tropical climate creates maintenance challenges.



Numerous U.S. medical teams have held clinics in the facility and also used it as a base to travel to remote locations where medical services are not available.

December OCJ Mission Team Provides Relief to Refugees

Larry Brady became aware of the dire condition of refugees being housed in a camp near the Clinic of Hope while on a planning trip to Panama last fall.

He came home determined to take relief goods on the November shipment, and to render aid to the camp on the Operation Christmas Joy trip in early December.



"With the help of the Dalraida Church of Christ World Missions outreach, we were able to provide each refugee with a

Nurse Practitioner Diane Edrington of Long Beach, Miss., worked with a doctor from the Ministry of Health to provide emergency medical attention to refugees in Panama.

blanket, a towel, a bag of hygiene supplies, and a selection of clothing," Larry reports. "We worked closely with the Sentafront border police on the project."

You are Invited!

**Friends of Panama Missions
Backyard Barbecue**

**Saturday, June 27, Beginning at Noon
at the Home of Larry and Betsy Brady**

15523 Hwy 31 Hope Hull, AL 36043

Attendees are asked to bring side dishes, desserts or drinks.

RSVP to panmission@bellsouth.net or 334-288-2458

Scenes of Operation Christmas Joy 2019



UPDATE ON PANAMA STUDENTS

Yati Chami, our "Godchild" from Panama, is doing extremely well in her studies at Freed Hardeman University and is thankful for those who help with her tuition and expenses. **Please contact me if you would like to help Yati.**

I also want to tell you about one of our more recent scholarship students, **Yosalina Morena**, a high school senior with dreams of becoming a pharmacist.



Yati and Yosalina helped to load after-Christmas bargains for next year's Christmas Joy.

Her U.S. sponsors, Larry and Mary Jo Hoffman of Luverne, Ala., graciously funded a visit to the U.S. for Yosalina over the Christmas holidays. She enjoyed learning about our culture and was excited to visit Disney World with our family. **Larry Brady**

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PEOPLE WHO "MAKE A DIFFERENCE"

By Sara Bills

Only a few of us know the amazing things that some folks have done, or continue to do, to make Operation Christmas Joy such an amazing project.



Billie Mosely spent a lot of time in her sewing room.

For several years, Willie "Billie" Mosely of Huntsville, Ala., and her daughter, Mary, of Montgomery, have shopped sales all year to assemble as many as 400 outfits of new clothing for boys and girls in Panama.

The accumulated donation is delivered by Mary to our workroom in Montgomery each fall, sorted by size and packaged in gallon zip lock bags **ready to go** into a gift box or into the hands of a child in Panama!

Sadly, Billie passed away last January at the age of 93. She was known for her many good works at the Sherrod Avenue Church of Christ in Huntsville. She especially enjoyed sewing projects.

Mary Mosely continues "making a difference." Last fall, as she dropped off her donation, Mary helped Jake and Mary Rachel Hunt pick out outfits to include with their shoe box gifts.



DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

By Larry Brady

"It's not WHAT YOU KNOW as much as WHO YOU KNOW!"

These familiar words of wisdom have served me well in Panama where "friends in **high** places" continue to be drawn to the humanitarian programs that we do among the most needy in Panama. As you may recall from previous publications, we have frequently benefitted from friendships at the U.S. Embassy and with representatives of the Panamanian government including officials of the Ministry of Health and even the First Lady of Panama.

Most valuable to us in recent years has been a partnership with the Sentafront Border Police who have generously providing both security and transportation for our medical teams and for our Operation Christmas Joy distribution, helping in any way needed.



Larry Brady met with Roger Mojica, the new Sub Director General of the Sentafront Border Police, to plan for future Panama Missions programs.

On a planning trip to Panama last September, I had a dinner meeting with the new Sub Director General Roger Mojica, and my friend of several years, Subcomisionado Larry Solis. We discussed their involvement in the upcoming OCJ trip in December and the medical teams in January and February. We also discussed providing aid to the refugees housed in a government camp in the Darien, which I was eager to do.

I don't know how many times I have been asked how much we get paid to work in Panama.

Director Mojica was especially impressed that all of our "personnel" from the U.S. freely volunteer to travel to Panama at their own expense, expecting nothing in return.

Part of my speech to a new mission team is about "serving as Jesus served." I refer to John 13, where Jesus washed His disciples' feet. Everything He did gives us an example of serving unselfishly.

I love watching our American teenagers play with Panamanian children in a schoolyard and our medical teams trudging up a river embankment to bring aid to a remote Indian village.

I am also grateful for those of you who unselfishly send gifts at Christmas and also those of you who donate money so that others can go to Panama.



Larry Solis of Sentafront accompanies "Santa" through the Children's Hospital in Panama City last December.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

BY LARRY BRADY

"In Memoriam" of Gates Winters, a Christian servant who passed away June 8, 2019, at age 79.



It has been more than ten years since **Gates Winters** of Macon, Ga., made his first trip to Panama, but he is still remembered fondly. Gates traveled to Panama in 2008 with one mission in mind - to help his audiologist friend, Ken Pollard, test hearing. But Gates came home with a new challenge.

Gates was retired from a 30-year career of public school teaching and coaching. He coached several sports, but baseball was his favorite.

It was called to his attention that the youth of Panama did not enjoy the recreational opportunities that American youth enjoy. Talk was bantered around about how great it would be for the small communities in the Darien to have teams to compete against each other. "Maybe Gates was the person to make that happen!" someone suggested.

Gates accepted the challenge and for about five years he led an effort to collect baseball gear and equipment to send to Panama. Annually, he and wife, Gloria, drove a pickup load of shirts, hats, gloves, balls and bats to Montgomery prior to the November container shipment. Larry Brady recalls that the communities did put together competing teams for awhile. Gates enjoyed two more trips to Panama before health issues prevented his returning.

Gates is especially remembered for his humor. "He kept everyone laughing at his jokes. Even the Panamanians who couldn't speak English laughed at his jokes," recalls Larry.

Ken describes his friend as "a Will Rogers, because of his ability to make an enduring impression."

Gloria recalls that there were more than 600 people at Gates' funeral. "Many were his former students who shared stories with me of his impact on their lives."