

# Health Talents International

June 22-29, 2024, Surgical Team

Trip Participants: **General Surgeons:** Ed Grogan, Eric Grogan; **OBGYN:** Kimberly Johnson; **Ophthalmologists:** Andrew Johnson, Larry Patterson and Michael Patterson; **Dentist:** Bob Huffstutter; **Anesthesiologists:** Chuck McIntosh; **Nurses:** Fernanda Cannon, Harli Crossen, Ashley Gerhard, Roger Graves, Kelly Greenwood, Melanie Grogan, Meghan Hickerson, Hannah Lee, Emily Nikolai, Jessika McKowen and Heather Shingleton; **Nurse Practitioner:** Nickie Spillers; **Surgical Techs:** Jason Andersen and Vickie VanHoose; **Ophthalmic Assistants:** Megan Flatt and Amber Maynord; **Dental Hygienist:** Jordan Anderson; **Optician:** Judy Sisson; **First Assist, PreMed Student:** Will Grogan; **Caregivers:** Jasee Andersen, Max Grogan, Maci Jones, Sofia McGrath, Kari Miller, Emma Miller, Ali Moultrie, Elara Moultrie, Julie Moultrie, Isaac Moultrie, Haley Suggs and Ava Williams; **Translator Intake/Discharge:** Rita Sills; **Translators:** Joey Cannon, Julie Ann Harper, Rita Huffstutter, Jay LeBlanc and Allie Shingleton; **Sterilization:** Susan Harper and Cary Sills; **Trip Chaplain:** Steve Awtrey; **Team Leader:** Rick Harper

“The wise man built his house upon the rocks...” Many of you know the song, and what happens to the house built upon the sand; so, what happens when the highway was constructed with a poor foundation and the ‘rains come tumbling down?’ Sinkholes, closed highways, detours, and full bladders.

We knew prior to our arrival, that the main highway from Guatemala City was closed due to a large sinkhole requiring months to repair. Shuttle travel on Saturday was longer than normal, it took around four hours, and praise the Lord, for the first time in many months, every traveler, every US team member, made their flight connection and we are all together on Saturday night at Clinica Ezell Hospital.

Not only did we all arrive on Saturday, but so did all of our supplies, ten bags along filled with donated supplies for eye surgery. Alcon, Bausch, and Lomb, along with other large ophthalmic manufacturers and pharmaceutical companies are incredibly generous and our veteran surgeons do a marvelous job sourcing and bringing many of the items they need for surgery. Dr. Michael Patterson took the lead for this trip, acquiring tens of thousands of dollars in donated lenses for cataract surgery and the needed supplies.

Our summer season trips are often family affairs, just one of the great joys found in serving with Health Talents. My wife, Susan, and daughter, Julie Ann were on this trip, meaning it automatically becomes one of my favorite trips. Three young nurses who either lived with us during college or are part of our home Bible study, joined us and I would claim either as a daughter. Harli Crossen, Ashley Gerhard, and Emily Nikolai. **(Harli (bottom right), Ashley (middle, and Emily (upper right)).**



Dr. Larry Patterson, now known as “Dr. Platinum,” pioneered our eye surgery teams more than thirty years ago, and Michael, mentioned earlier, is his son. Heather Shingleton was there with her daughter, Allie; Vickie VanHoose with her daughter, Haley; Dr. Bob and Rita Huffstutter with daughter, Jordan and granddaughter, Ava; OR nurse Fernanda Cannon with daughter/translator, Joey; surgical tech, Jason Andersen with his daughter, Jasee; Emma Miller with her mother, Kari, and the Grogan family.

Dr. Ed Grogan lost his lovely wife, Carolyn, in August of last year. Ten months after that loss, the family celebrated her legacy by traveling to Guatemala. Son and surgeon, Dr. Eric Grogan came with his wife, nurse Melanie, and sons Will and Max. Will is now in medical school, making the third generation to serve as a physician. Ed’s daughter, Julie Moultrie, brought her daughters, Alli and Elara, as well as son, Isaac. ***(The Moultrie family in ‘massage’ mode after a busy day of administering eye drops and transporting patients.)***



Families serving together, making memories together and establishing an expectation, a legacy!

This was our second eye surgery team to use our new phaco machines, and after completing ninety-one surgeries before noon on Thursday, we can confidently say they were worth the investment.

Very few trips are devoid of ‘catch your breath’ moments, and one is worthy of sharing. RN, Ashley Gerhard was on her fourth trip with Health Talents, yet she has only been practicing for four years, mostly in ICU, having been refined by the fire that was Covid in 2020. She will tell you that pediatrics is not her favorite!



Enter a preteen young boy needing eye surgery, too young to for surgery without a bit more anesthesia than a local block would provide.



His surgery went well, and then he had a reaction to the medicines he was given, and nurse Ashley sprang into action.

One challenge with pediatric patients comes from 'unknown' allergies...now we know.

Clearly, he is none the worse for the wear and enjoyed some extra attention. **(Note the Bible studies going on in the background.)**

One of the sweeter moments happened during the course of eye exams. Our eye exam chair 'table' was stuck and would not pivot. The only way to complete this sweet patient's eye exam was to have her sit on the lap of her translator, Julie Ann, while Amber Maynard maneuvered the equipment as best she could. **(The chair was repaired later in the week.)**

You have heard of Baskin Robbins and their thirty-one flavors of ice cream?

Guatemala has thirty-one versions, or more, of road strikes. I have been there for strikes over bus fares, bus driver protection, voting irregularities, electric rates, teacher salaries, road conditions and the latest, military retirement pay. The strikes started early in the week, compromising travel with assembly blockades at various critical road intersections. One of our nurses needed to return early, and her four-hour shuttle ride turned into nine hours, and she missed her flight. We were able to get her a hotel room that afternoon and change her flight from 12:29 PM to 1:30 AM the next morning. Meghan Hickerson, RN, handled this with grace and I was able to use a 'first-class upgrade' for her flight back to Ohio.



Knowing the strike was still going on, and the main highway was still closed, we called an audible and changed our scheduled departure from 7:30 AM to 4:00 AM, brought the shuttles in that evening so they might avoid the blockades coming down, and prepared for a short night of rest.



Despite the early departure, our team still wanted to enjoy a night of sharing during our devotional time. Our trip chaplain, Steve Awtrey, had done a masterful job all week, and closed us out in tender fashion.

Our team was up to the challenge, and we got off on time, arrived in Antigua around 6:30 AM and walked down to San Martin for breakfast before striking out to explore...and beat the rains arriving later in the day.

We had to forgo our traditional team photo at Ezell, so I will leave with you with a photo of the Grogan/Moultrie family. If we are lucky, this will inspire you to bring your family and join the three-generation club.

Memories were made, dreams realized, lives changed, friendships forged, and God was glorified!

