

Health Talents International

March 8-15, 2024, Abilene Christian University Mobile Team

Trip Participants: **Dentists:** Marissa Blackwell, Kristin Goodwin; **Physician:** Charlie Ferrell; **ACU Faculty Leaders:** Amber Brokaw, Charla Mietschin; **ACU Students:** Logan Carroll, Annie Escobar, Alison Ferrell, Ryan Gussert, Emily Hine, Joshua Holt, Elijah Medina, Cayden Meyer, Ariana Pereira, Payton Reinke, Hidai Sanchez, Liv Schnick and Keaton Weary; **Translator:** Becky Dunham; **Team Leader:** Rick Harper

This week was a family affair as we were blessed to have Becky Dunham, older sister to our very own, Kemmel Dunham, on this trip, and big sisters have an abundance of stories they can share about their little brothers. I will not divulge much, but she did say Kemmel was the family prince growing up!

Dr. Charlie Ferrell was also with us, Charlie is married to Dr. Lisa Dunham's sister, and Charlie was joined by his daughter, Alison, an ACU student. Alison says she looks like her mother and thinks like her father.

Each of our medical providers in this group graduated from ACU, and dentists, Marissa Blackwell and Kristin Goodwin, were on the 2012 Spring break team to Clinica Ezell. Now best friends with private practices in the same town, they regaled us with tales of their time in Abilene as students. Their return as providers inspires me, and surely serves to inspire the students they patiently taught all week long.

This group was large enough that we split into two to three groups most days with clinics in Chichi, Chichtinimit, Las Trampas, Lemoa and Sacapulas, at elevations ranging from 4,000 to 9,000 feet above sea level. Our patient totals this week were 401; 175 dental patients and 226 medical.

Dr. Marissa Blackwell, in the photo to the left, is shown here teaching future dentist, Payton Reinke, the art of 'numbing the patient.' Dr. Kristin Goodwin is doing the same for future physician, Josh Holt, who has already been accepted into medical school.



It was hard to tell who had the most fun interacting with the children in our ABC Program. The students took turns reading to, reading with, and helping the students with games and puzzles. Reading books is not part of most children's home life. Books read for pleasure are uncommon and you would struggle to find a book shelf in most rural area homes. These activities are purposeful and fun at the same time.



Liv Schnick, who lives to love, is in the photo to your right, and was especially adept at engaging with the children. Cayden, Logan who is on the left, Josh and many others invested in these children.



And when you finish early with your dental patients, you might find Drs. Blackwell and Goodwin on the floor, embracing their inner child and like Jesus, allowing the little children to come to them!

Hidai Sanchez was one of our student translators, and they were all invaluable. It is a bit of trade-off for translators as you must suppress your desire to be involved with the physicians or dentists in a hands-on mode like those taking vitals or polishing teeth, you are so busy translating.



At the same time, the opportunities for observing and learning are abundant! In the photo to the left, Hidai is shown translating for Dr. Kristin and providing instructions to a patient.

Not pictured are Charla Miertschin, PhD, the new dean of ACU's College of Science and Engineering. Dr. Miertschin, and Amber Brokaw, lab manager in the department of Chemistry and Biochemistry were the ACU faculty leaders. They led by example, settling into the role 'dental sterilizers.' (They relieved me from washing dental instruments between patients and soaking them in a 'cold sterilization' solution for cleaning.)

The March 2024 ACU trip is now history. The students and faculty continued their tradition of service, returning home with memories and deepened relationships.

We hope the students will follow the example set by Drs. Marissa Blackwell, Charlie Ferrell and Kristin Goodwin by turning this trips into a stepping stone for future service.

Health Talents is honored by the relationship we enjoy with ACU and the friendships forged through service...in Jesus' name. ***Rick Harper***