

Health Talents International

August 30-September 7, 2024 Surgical Team

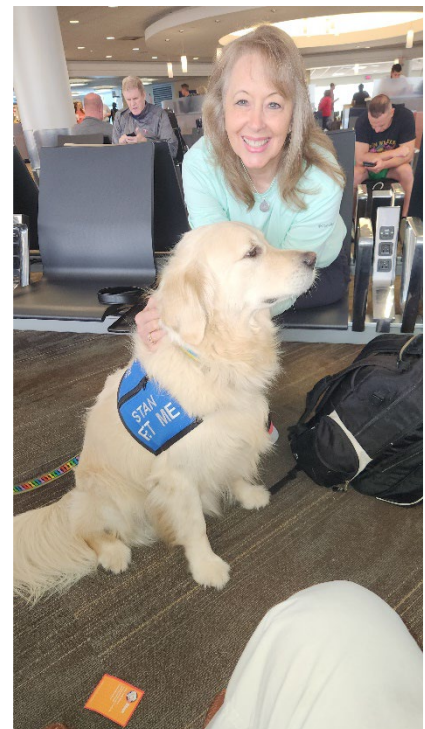
Trip Participants: **Surgeons:** Mark Albini, Glen Blue, Levi Godard and Vanessa Ortiz; **Anesthesiologist:** Jason Buehler, Stephanie DeFord; **Nurse Anesthetist:** Ken Beach, Duane Gill, Janet Sessums; **Surgical PA:** Abby Atchley; **Nurses:** Pauline Bushman, Brenda Corder, Samuel DeFord, Leslie Doke, Rachel Floyd, Josh Kaczmarczyk, Sarah King, Abby Mullins, Cameron Pfeiffer, Jodi Pilot, Kelly Smith, Susan Thomas, Becky Tilton, Jade Vaughn; **Surgical Techs:** Kathy Jackson, Jeff Whittington; **Occupational Therapist:** Katie Smith; **Physical Therapist:** Tyler Floyd; **Paramedic:** Will Atchley; **Lay Circulator/Second Assist:** Kat Johnson; **Caregivers:** Tami Beach, Sarah Bradbury, Collin Buehler, Sherry Coble, Maxie Fortner, Robert Mullins, Gwen Schwartz, Neta King; **Translator Intake/Discharge:** Rita Sills; **Sterilization:** Ernie King, Susan Harper, Cary Sills; **Trip Chaplain:** Klay Smith; **Team Leader:** Rick Harper

Doozy: Something special or unusual, especially something unusually bad: (*Cambridge Dictionary*) **September 2024 was a week of doozies!**

Where to begin?

- The therapy dog in the Little Rock airport, calming the frazzled dealing with flight fears, or delays. (Or those in need of a smile!)
- The circulating nurse who discovered her passport had expired, requiring a trip to a National Passport office and receiving her new passport three days before we flew to Guatemala.
- The OR scrub nurse who came to our rescue, and only receiving permission to join us four days before her flight.
- The simple hernia that ended up having more than forty inches of intestines in the hernia sack.
- The seven hours of urethra reconstruction surgery for one young man.
- The rape victim. (More on her later.)
- Flooding of rooms at Porta Hotel Antigua, requiring a third of our group to relocate to a different hotel.

Some of the doozies were special, like this team, others were unusual and even the bad led to occasions of rejoicing!



We got off to a great start on Sunday, having arrived at a decent hour on Saturday and receiving a peaceful night of rest. Each afternoon, the moisture from the Pacific met the mountains behind us and provided us with cooling showers and night-time temperatures in the low seventies or high sixties. Rest does wonders for the weary and weary we were...each night.

Worship service was uplifting, our Sunday evening devotionals with Klay Smith were thoughtful, insightful, and practical.

Nine surgeries were completed on Sunday, three in each room and expectations were high...Monday and Tuesday brought some doozy cases.

Dr. Mark Albini, our lone GYN surgeon, spent an average of three hours with each patient Monday-Wednesday and was assisted by his daughter, Kat, as second assistant. The length of the cases meant we had a higher level of blood loss, but no complications as a result. Dr. Albini was like a 'surgeon explorer' all week. He may have started with a straight forward abdominal hysterectomy, but once the incision was made, he discovered a hidden hernia or some other issue requiring surgical repair. Patient after patient was on the receiving end of care that was greater than they expected; and left more whole than when they came. He would complete three cases each day through Thursday.

Dr. Blue and his team from Searcy, surgical techs Kathy Jackson and Jeff Whittington were good for five-six cases Monday through Wednesday, even with multiple difficult, doozy, cases. The sweetest, and saddest, may have been the aforementioned rape victim.

Naturally, patient R will remain nameless. She was diagnosed with a hernia, pretty straightforward, and when prepping her for surgery a faint scare was observed from a prior surgery. She had not made mention of this during her exam, and her exam did not include that area of her anatomy. When we inquired about the scar, she began to cry!

In her youth, she had been violently raped, and objects were used that pierced her colon, requiring a colostomy. Tears were shared and prayers lifted as those in the room began to 'leak Jesus.' (My definition of tears during such moments.)

Working through and around the scarring from her prior surgery extended her OR time a bit and all was well with her body, her spirit, and her heart!

All the while in room two, Dr. Vanessa Ortiz of Puerto Rico, and Dr. Levi Godard of Canada were our 'international' surgeons. We even threw in an Arkansas, Tennessean, and Virginian for good measure. This room completed seventeen surgeries, with the ureteral repair taking seven hours in the OR over the course of two days...qualifying as a doozy. They had no surgical patients on Thursday and went out on mobile clinics.

Our mobile clinic teams went out Monday through Thursday, and we scheduled patients and training programs for our occupational and physical therapists. Tyler returned from his first day with a heart-warming story. A man came in with limited mobility and was barely able to get around.

Seeking relief from pain and discomfort, maybe a small measure of improved mobility, this patient was not expecting healing...but healing it was. Upon further examination, it was determined that his hips and pelvis were misaligned. A tug here, a shove there and hands that knew what they were doing...and he walked away.



Katie Smith, a May graduate from OT school, came for her first trip with our chaplain, Klay, a veteran of several trips with his family. Katy worked with our ABC families, providing the parents with simple skills and exercises they can use with their children to enhance their mobility and hand-eye coordination. She primarily worked with mothers, babies, and toddlers.

(Katie with Dr. Levi Godard on her Thursday adventure.)



Where to begin...where to end?

We will end with one 'doozy of a team' and their team photo.



Rick Harper