

Health Talents International
August Surgical Trip
Clinica Ezell Hospital
August 3-10, 2024

Trip Participants: *Surgeons: Dwayne Fulks, Jack Hudkins, Michael Kohlman, Dwayne Lett, Nathan Powell, Philip Strawther; Anesthesiologist: Stephen Harvey; Nurse Anesthetists: Gordon Corder, Kimberly Schmalzriedt; Surgical PA: Joe Calderon; RN's: Jonathan Cambridge, Meagan Celsor, Patricia Corder, Rose Evans, Titus Dauck, Kerrin Griggs, Cindy Kohlman, Amy Moore, Laura Petersburg, Jodi Pilot, Lori Powell, Brenda Robinson, Patsy Sikes, Shannon Willems; Respiratory Therapist: Adriana Castillo; Nursing Student: Trinity Bond, Deliah Stewart; OT Student: Anna Sanders; OR Circulator: Derrick Sikes; Intake/Discharge/Translator: Rita Sills; Sterilization: Travis Griggs, Doyle Robinson, Cary Sills; Compassionate Caregivers: Bentlye Blackburn, Alexander Cambridge, Aubrey Hudkins, Christian Kohlman, Nick Moore, Natalie Powell, Nora Powell, Brandy Prude, Charlee; Trip Chaplain and Team Leader: Rick Harper*

The summer of 2024 will be known as the 'year of the sinkhole!' What began as a troublesome, dangerous, highway closing sinkhole in June is now an economy crippling mega construction project the size and depth of a professional football stadium. Can you say detour?

As is required in such situations, we adapted, and knowing that the bus ride could take anywhere from five to seven hours after leaving Guatemala City, we determined to send a small contingency Saturday morning to get a head start. Selecting from those who arrived Friday evening, we sent three plastic surgeons, one general surgeon, one anesthesia provider and a few family members at 9 AM. Traveling via van on roads impassable by a charter bus, group A made their way to Ezell taking the Yepocapa road. Steep, beautiful and majestic, they snaked near the volcano Acatenango, skirting the edges of a town established in 1520, before making their way to Santa Lucia Cotzumalguapa and to the coastal highway. Four and half hours later, they arrived in Montellano.

Meanwhile, the remnant, group B, waited for those arriving Saturday, leaving the Guatemala City airport around 1 PM. We took a different route and reached the coastal highway three and half hours later, before encountering another road closure due to high winds, rain, downed trees and small mudslides. We arrived near 8 PM, over six hours on the road, and a wee bit fatigued.

We did not unpack supplies that night, simply unloaded bags into our rooms or the dining area, ate supper with instructions shared while dining, and it was off to bed. All were grateful that group A had been able to complete patient consultations and ready the OR rooms for Sunday. Sleep came easy!

August, as are most of our summer trips, filled with family members. Brenda Robinson, one of our anchor nurses made her second trip of the year, bringing two of her granddaughters. Known to them as Mimi, Charlee on the left is now known as the Panhandle Princess and Bentlye, to the right of grandmother, is Pancake.



Dr. Nathan Powell is pictured with his daughter Natalie on the left, her second trip, and his wife, RN, Lori and Norah on the right. We have been trying to get Lori to come for 2015 when Nathan made his first trip. (Their favorite translator this week is in the purple scrubs.)

The week went extremely smoothly with some sweet stories and a few bittersweet. Dr. Powell saw a returning patient whose hernia he repaired last year but returned this trip for another issue...testicular cancer that has progressed far enough that nothing, beyond prayer, can be done. A sobering moment for Dr. Powell and team!

Our plastic surgeon trio, Drs. Fulks, Lett and Strawther examined a young lady with breast cancer and determined that a mastectomy was the best course of action. She agreed, and then

began to vacillate, taking two days to decide. Ultimately, she opted to have a breast biopsy and place her care in the hands of the Guatemala cancer hospital. She may yet return to us, though we cannot offer any care beyond surgery. Dr. Fulks assured her that he would personally perform reconstructive surgery in the future, providing a measure of hope with all of the love and genuine concern that is his nature.

On a brighter note, little Aby was a pure delight and captured hearts with her precious smile and sweet nature. She had burned two of her fingers when younger, and now they were constricting and rendering her unable to fully open her hand. The scarring, if untreated, would one day prevent her from being able to use that hand.

Adriana Castillo could not contain her joy while holding Aby, and Aby kept requesting to “see her fingers.”

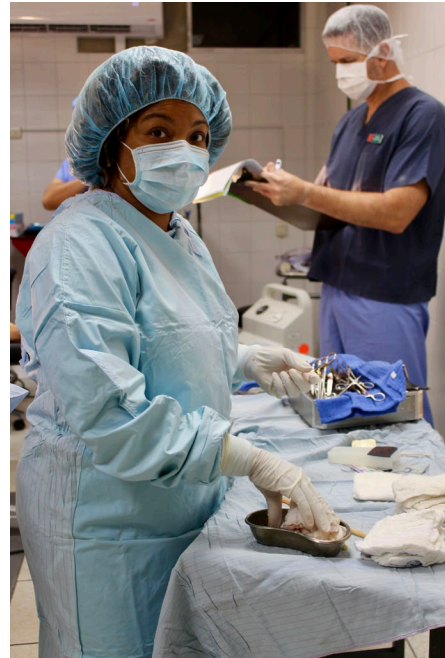
Soon, that right hand will be drawing and grasping her daddy’s hand! (Dr. Fulks below)



During the course of the performing surgery on seventy-three patients, a few on our team went out on mobile medical clinics. Anna Sanders, an OT student, is pictured with a gaggle of giggling girls, was one of those going mobile.



Rose Evans, an OR nurse and first assist back home, returned for her fourth trip and this time, brought her daughter, Brandy Prude. Dr. Powell requested another ‘helper’ in his room, someone who could be trained to scrub in and serve as a second assist holding retractors and such. Brandy, a young Air Force retiree, agreed to step in and be trained by her mother...and Rose is beside herself with glee. Before she left Guatemala, Brandy had already researched ‘surgical tech’ training programs near her home in Orlando, FL. (Rose on the left, Brandy on the right.)



The 2024 August surgical team invites you to join us in 2025...To God Be The Glory!

