



Mission of Love



*"You are not here to save the world, but to touch the hands that are within your reach."
~ Kathleen Price*

October 19, 2011

My mission of love to Guatemala City...

I am Amy Bush and I just spent a miraculous week with Kathy Price and the "Mission of Love" at the Hospital Metropolitano in Guatemala City, Guatemala. For you to understand my experience there, you need to know a few details of my background. I grew up in a farming community and worked as a registered nurse in a small community hospital. I was fortunate enough to have both the drive and the assistance of great mentors to earn my bachelor's degree in nursing, and a MBA from the Fisher college of Business at The Ohio State University while spending three years planning and implementing the opening of a new community hospital in Dublin, Ohio. I recently accepted the position of Executive Director of Surgical Services at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Presbyterian Hospital, including overseeing 42 operating rooms, pre-operative care, post-operative care, sterile processing and an amazing team of nurses, techs, surgeons and anesthesia providers.



Why is this important to know? Of all my experiences in the world of medicine and nursing, the most gratifying and exhilarating time of my life happened recently when I volunteered for a week at the Hospital Metropolitano in Guatemala. I have been on 4 previous mission trips including China, Jamaica, and Haiti shortly after the earthquake, but the rewards of helping the children of Guatemala and the expression of thanks by their parents was beyond compare. These poor children with facial defects including cleft lips, cleft palates, fistulas from their mouths into their noses allowing food and liquids to pass from one to the other and disfigured noses came from all over the country by whatever means possible to be treated by our varied team from the United States. They were examined all in one day and triaged for surgery. Some had to be turned away as the equipment or facilities to treat them were not available at this visit. Many had no place to stay but the hospital. All were eager to have surgery to correct their problems. You could see their desire to be better, to eliminate the stigma of their problems and the hope in the eyes of their parents to help their children.



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With only 2 operating rooms to work with on an intermittent basis, 2 teams were formed each with a surgeon (one a plastic and reconstructive surgeon, one an oral and maxillofacial surgeon) to provide as much care as possible for the 27 children who were selected as potential candidates. The assistance of Dr Edgar Moran, the chief general surgeon at the hospital was invaluable. The equipment was not the best, but the skill of the anesthesia, general surgical and nursing staff teams were as good as any I had worked with, and provided excellent care for the children of their country, often donating their own time to care for these children. The relationship between the surgeons, anesthesia and the nursing staff of the Guatemalan and United States teams was the strongest I have ever experienced. I had the opportunity to provide many services I frequently oversee...scrub nurse, circulator, sterile processing, etc. Much of the supplies, equipment and instruments were provided by UPMC, CareFusion/V.Mueller, Global Links, and Dr. Richard Scheetz, which facilitated optimal care. Our interpreter, Dr Todd Bolitin, was an outstanding asset as he could explain to the families in comforting words the successes of the surgeries, and the tears were evidence of their joy. Other volunteers such as Bob and Peggy, and Chuck provided assistance as needed without having medical backgrounds. They frequently made long statements of gratitude that would break your heart and make you cry. The experience of helping these poor people was beyond compare.

I would be remiss if I didn't express my sincerest gratitude to Rick and Chuck Scheetz for introducing me to the Mission of Love and to Kathy for welcoming me with open arms to this life changing opportunity. Thank you for helping my heart grown bigger than ever before.

I can't wait for another opportunity to go back. Although all of the volunteers pay their own way to participate, there are costs associated with caring for the children that must be born somehow. Please support the "Mission of Love" so that they can continue to bring a smile to the faces of children in Guatemala and elsewhere.