

As I reflect on the Mission of Love Mission Trip to Tecpan, Guatemala in September of 2016, several things come to mind:

I had been praying for God to show me where He wanted me to serve him. Out of the blue one day last spring I received a message from Kathy Price inviting me to come along on a trip to Guatemala. I thought, OK here is my answer! Well, the dates for that particular trip did not coincide with my schedule but there was another one in September that did. It was to be a medical rehabilitation mission in the Mayan town of Tecpan.

Prior to the trip I had the amazing experience of visiting the Mission of Love warehouse where we packed wheelchairs and walkers and pediatric rehab equipment into huge boxes to be transported to Guatemala via the Denton program military airlift. We also packed clothing, toys, IV poles and medical supplies that had been donated.

Upon our arrival in Tecpan the first thing you notice are the very steep streets and the ladies in their traditional colorful hand woven blouses called huipiles walking those streets and balancing large fabric sacks full of their wares on their heads as they head to the market. Hopefully they will earn enough money that day to feed their family that evening. Maybe they will even be able to buy a chicken - a real treat since they can only afford to eat meat once every week or so.

We stayed the week at a lovely little hotel called Casa De Los Abuelos which translates as The Grandparents' House. Each morning the owner cooked us a very hearty and delicious breakfast before we left for the hospital. And the coffee was so very good!

The urgent care hospital in town was to be the site of our clinic. Even though it was an emergency facility, the lack of supplies and the bareness of the place really stood out. Even simple items such as Tylenol and bandaids were lacking. Fortunately, we brought most everything that we would use for the week and we were able to purchase other necessities from a pharmacy in town. And, did I mention? We had water for about an hour each day! It makes one think about how much we take for granted in the United States. We have everything we could possibly need available for immediate utilization.

When we arrived for the first day of clinic the people were already there waiting for us. As we walked around introducing ourselves and playing with the kids you could see them relax as they saw our smiling faces and they realized we were not going to be a bunch of scary white giants from another world. You see, the Mayan people are very short in stature and dark skinned.



As the days went on and our expert team of rehab specialists examined our patients we learned a little about their lives. Many of the complaints from the adults were back, shoulder and leg pain from walking since they had no vehicle, from digging the ground by hand or making tortillas every day, from carrying children with disabilities everywhere they needed to go for years because they had no other means of mobility.

I remember one man 84 years of age who walked in barefoot complaining that his feet hurt. When questioned about his shoes he replied that he didn't have any and had never worn them. We put shoes on his feet and a big smile of comfort came over his face. Many received new shoes that week.

Another man came carrying his adult brother on his back. Because of a disability he was unable to walk. Another had never been out of the house for 30 years. He couldn't walk and his father wouldn't take him out. In that culture there is shame and discrimination heaped upon those who have disabilities.

The children were the real heartbreakers. The club feet, the cleft lips and palates, the cerebral palsies, the dystrophies were all so difficult to fathom because in the US they would have received good medical care from birth. They would have been given a wheelchair, walker or brace. They would have received physical and occupational therapy and appropriate medicines. They wouldn't have had to lie on the floor all day because they had nothing to sit on. These people truly are the poorest of the poor.

Well, Kathy received news that the wheelchairs were held up in customs in Guatemala City. They had no idea how long it would take but they were working on it. Our patients needed those chairs desperately-it was the reason for coming to the clinic. Many prayers were said that day and they finally showed up 2 days later in the evening in the dark at our doorstep in Tecpan. Many, many thanks to UPS who flew them from the US and delivered them at no charge.

The people were contacted and told to return to the clinic so they or their children could be fitted for the right device. 40 adults and children received wheelchairs or pediatric strollers or walkers that day. It was a beautiful miracle the way everything fell into place and everyone received just the right piece of equipment that they needed. There were tears of joy and smiles all around that day not only from the patients, but from the volunteers as well. It truly was a successful Mission of Love!





My take away from the whole experience is this: Our God is a God of miracles. He makes things happen. He brings people together. He wants us to care for the poor, the widows and the orphans. The generosity of people who give their time, talents and treasures is overwhelming.

I am particularly grateful for the volunteers that I was fortunate to work with both from the US and from Guatemala. We had excellent interpreters, cooks, rehabilitation personnel, driver, volunteers and community leaders from Tecpan, and wonderful people from the US Air Force in Vienna and Boston. I have made lifetime friends from both countries through this experience.

I am very thankful to Kathy Price and Mission of Love that I was given the opportunity to serve our friends in Guatemala.

Joyfully,  
Becky Spratt



**The purpose of life  
is not to be happy.**  
It is to be useful, to be  
honorable, to be compassionate,  
to have it make some difference  
that you have lived and lived well.

