

Refuge International

ANNUAL REPORT

A Year in Review

Exciting work, successful surgeries, advancements in education, and enhanced health care made *Refuge International's* fourth year in operation one of the best. Eight volunteer mission teams traveled to Guatemala to work on water and health care programs. Through collaborative efforts with other nonprofit organizations in the USA, as well as Guatemala, *Refuge* provided many services: it served more than 1.25 million meals to victims of Hurricane Stan; donated an ambulance to San Raymundo, Guatemala; helped a little boy to walk;

provided much-needed surgery for a missionary; helped provide a teacher for a school; and helped fund education beyond grade school for five students. In addition to these services, *Refuge* provided daily vitamins and quarterly anti-parasite medicine for school children in eleven villages; sent lifesaving medication and equipment to health care workers and midwives; and shipped surgical supplies, including two OR tables. In the Sarstun area of Guatemala, cervical cancer screenings were started and

more than 2,000 toothbrushes and tooth-pastes were distributed to children. *Refuge* also screened more than 200 Hispanics in the local area for hypertension, diabetes, and cholesterol problems. These are just some of the services done in 2005. The wonderful supporters and volunteers are what make *Refuge International* a success.



2005

3rd Annual Report

Accomplishments

- 8 mission teams in 2005
- Over 4000 patients treated
- 76 Lifesaving surgeries performed
- 11,000+ Volunteer hours
- 127 Volunteers traveled to Guatemala with many making several trips
- 1.25 million meals delivered to Hurricane victims in Guatemala
- Ambulance delivered to San Raymundo
- Little boy received surgery to help him walk
- Cofounder receives local and national awards
- Collaborative relationship with University of Texas at Tyler grows stronger

The Saul Project

Saul in Hebrew means 'asked.'

While the majority of *Refuge International's* projects are aimed at improving the lives of many through our health care and water projects, we are sometimes **asked** to help in-

dividuals with health problems. Such was the case of Saul from Cerro Blanco, Guatemala. Almost two years ago, volunteers met Saul, a little boy living in this remote village who was born with bilateral club feet. Saul had difficulty walking and had never been able to wear shoes. Through collaborative efforts with Scottish Rite hospital and Continental's CAREFORCE program, *Refuge* was

able to bring Saul to the USA for much needed surgery. Four months after arriving, Saul put on his first pair of shoes. There are many more children who need similar surgeries. We hope the "Saul" Project can help them with their needs and continue making a difference.

Saul's feet before surgery



Saul's first pair of shoes



Ambulance sent to San Raymundo

During the February clinic in San Raymundo, a surgical patient needed to be sent to a hospital for follow-up care. An ambulance was dispatched to carry the patient to the National Hospital in Guatemala City. The helpful ambulance attendants from San Raymundo arrived in a rusty van with absolutely no equipment. In fact, wire was used to hold down the back door once the patient, surgeon and nurse anesthetist were loaded. There was no monitoring equipment, no oxygen, no inside lights, no stretcher and not even a hook on which to hang the intravenous fluids. The patient lay on the floor in a sling.

Dr. Greg Harrington, a member of the *Refuge International* Board of Directors, saw the need for improved ambulance service. Upon his return home, Dr. Harrington, who is the medical director for the Hallsville Ambulance Service, facilitated the donation of a used ambulance. The ambulance was shipped to Guatemala and is now in use!

Refuge International and all of the people of San Raymundo are grateful to the Hallsville Fire Department for their generous contribution! And also to the Marshall Fire Department for donating supplies for the ambulance.



Water Projects



“Worldwide, a child dies every 8 seconds from contaminated water,” according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

In 2005, three water teams traveled to Guatemala. It took two trips to get a well in San Juan, a fishing village on the east coast. This village of 400 people was using water from hand dug wells, about 18 feet deep. The water was obviously contaminated, but they had no other source. A well was placed on church property on the second attempt. Fresh, clean water is now available to all villagers.

While working in the San Raymundo area of Guatemala, the third team worked with the

Mayor’s office to test all of the wells supplying water for the municipality. These were all found to be contaminated. A plan has been developed to filter and chlorinate these wells so that all those living in San Raymundo will have safe, clean drinking water.

Education

“I want to stay, but I did not get paid for last year and I have to feed my family.” The teacher from Sarstun school came to us with his plight. He taught all of 2004 in his village without pay. While he sees the education of the children in his village as being very important, he could not stay another year without pay. *Refuge* supporters stepped forward and paid his salary for 2005 in order to keep this teacher doing what

he does best....teach!

Volunteers and supporters collected hundreds of dollars worth of supplies which were distributed to all of the villages where *Refuge* is working.

The other component of *Refuge’s* education program is sponsoring children to continue their education. Most all of the villages in the Sarstun area have schools which go



Gerson is a 16 year old orphan who works while going to school to support his grandparents and two younger siblings. He’s one of the young men *Refuge* sponsors in school

up to 6th grade. However, students wishing to continue their education must move to a larger town where further educational facilities are available. This year, *Refuge* helped five young people continue their education at a cost of only \$45 a month.

Refuge International's Health Care Projects

San Raymundo

The October 2005 medical team was the 6th team that *Refuge* has taken into San Raymundo. One of the most exciting things happening has been the increased collaboration with the University of Texas at Tyler College of Nursing. More and more undergraduate students and Family Nurse Practitioner students are traveling to Guatemala with *Refuge*. Their participation has increased the number of patients that can be seen as well as the number of surgeries that can be performed. The students collect hygiene supplies that are distributed to all of the patient families that are

seen. They also developed a teaching video which is shown as patients wait to be seen. Several of the faculty are also actively involved in *Refuge* projects related to midwives and the parasite program.

Refuge continues to collaborate with and encourage other groups to take teams into San Raymundo. The Guatemalan committee that is responsible for the clinic has been very encouraged by the increased participation. *Refuge* continues to work on getting the clinic up and running as a fulltime charity facility.



San Raymundo Medical Mission team February 2005

"I think of Guatemala a lot and how much I learned from that experience both educationally and spiritually."

Allison Green, student nurse

Sarstun

"Before *Refuge* came to Sarstun, our children were dying. Now our children don't die anymore." Patrician Milian shared her perceptions with volunteers working in Sarstun this year. While mission teams do play a vital role in helping people in the Sarstun area of Guatemala, a bigger impact is made when local health care workers are given medications and supplies needed to provide basic care for the people living there

throughout the year. Each village has a lay person who has had some basic health care teaching, but until *Refuge* began going to Sarstun, they had no medications or materials to use. Each mission team spends a day teaching the local health care workers about basic health care and about the

"Before *Refuge* came to Sarstun, our children were dying. Now our children don't die anymore" *Patrica Milian, a resident of Sarstun*

medications that are left for them to use. One team supplied suture materials and spent the morning with the health care workers teaching them how to suture using a chicken.



Parasites

Worms don't make the headlines. There will never be a 'made for TV movie' about the devastation worms cause. Yet they have few rivals in terms of devastation. According to the World Health Organization, two billion people are currently infected. Apart from permanent organ damage, worm infections cause anemia, poor physical growth, poor intellectual development and impaired cognitive

function.

This has been dramatically apparent in the Sarstun area villages. When *Refuge* initially entered each of the villages, the children had sores on their legs, huge stomachs, and thinning hair. After a single treatment, remarkable changes in their physical appearance were apparent to the *Refuge* volunteers working in the area. A study of the heights and weights measured before and after treatment reflected

this statistically significant growth. Currently, every school age child in the Sarstun area, is receiving parasite medication every three months. Another study, in collaboration with researchers at Yale, is underway to look at the frequency of parasite medication needed. *Refuge's* goal is to see every child in Guatemala receive treatment for parasites at least three times a year.

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You must be the change
you wish to see in the
world.

Ghandi

Refuge International's

Mission and Vision Statements

Refuge International is a 501(c)3 compassionate volunteer organization dedicated to the goal of improving the lives of families and individuals through the collaborative development of sustainable programs in areas where health care, adequate nutrition, clean water and education are lacking or nonexistent.

We believe that all of humanity is of equal worth and should have their essential needs met without regard to culture, ideology or religion. When people reach out to meet a need, those who choose to help benefit as do those who are in need. Working within these basic tenets we hope to improve the lives of all.

Refuge Co-founder Recognized

Refuge co-founder and president, Deborah Bell, was recognized by several organizations during the past year for her work with Refuge International.

In January, she and eleven other women were named "Stars Over Longview" by Longview Regional Hospital for their ability to "Rise to the Occasion" in the community.

Deborah was chosen in May as one of four national winners of the Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceuticals Personal Products Division *Remarkable Women* contest.

In addition to making an appearance on the television talk show "The View", she was awarded \$5,000 for Refuge.

Deborah was also recipient of the "Stand on a Better World" contest grand prize of \$25,000 from Mannington Floors. Finally, in recognition of her



extraordinary achievements, she was honored by the Gilmer Area Chamber of Commerce as the 2005 Outstanding Citizen of the Year.

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