



EL NIÑO REY

A Mexican Scholarship Program and Dental Mission

Spring 2011

Congratulations to This Year's El Niño Rey Volunteers

Results from the 2011 Dental Missions

<u>Patients Seen</u>	<u>Extractions</u>	<u>Fillings</u>	<u>Cleanings</u>	<u>Medical</u>	<u>Toothbrushings</u>
812	825	1,029	437	182	103

Trip 1

Maureen Brady
Tom Cusick
Mike Gordon
Bill Gordon
Tom Gordon
Jerry Nolan
Margaret Nolan
Patrick Gries
Kevin Gries

Lizz Breden
Fr. Bob Heinz
Nancy McGovern
Jim Orbon
Bill Holohan
Tim McBride
Kevin O'Malley
Jim Durso

Trip 2

Joumana Basha-Farhat
John Gutbrod
Dev Kennedy
Mark Leaman
Merissa Malacara
Beth Mierzwa
Maria Oralla Morena
Mike Nolan

Karen O'Malley
Jim Seeberg
Jackie Slovic
Bob Slovic
Trish Sweeney
Patrick Sweeney
David Williams
Maria Moreno-York





Bearing Gifts

Mark Leaman and Maria Moreno-York dropped by the Achicga primary school to deliver school supplies provided by generous ENR donors

By Mark Leaman

Maria Moreno-York and Mark Leaman left the dental clinic in Achicga on a February morning carrying a crate full of school supplies. They made the short walk up the rocky road to the elementary school and arrived just before the start of the school day.

Kids were streaming into the dusty school-yard carrying their books and dressed sharply in their red and white checkered uniform shirts. The kids were obviously delighted at the novelty of the foreigners who had come to visit and gladly posed for pictures.

Maria and Mark introduced themselves to one of the *maestros* and the school Director. The Director called the kids to order over the loud-speaker, and they immediately lined up by grade on the play-

ground.

Within each grade were neat and orderly lines for boys and girls.

The Director brought the Mexican flag from his office and presented it to a group of older girls who formed an honor guard of sorts.

These girls solemnly marched the flag in formation up and down the playground in front of the lines of boys and girls before coming to a stop in front of the Director. A young boy was called forward from his line to lead the school in singing the Mexican national anthem. His voice was so soft and sweet that it could barely be heard over the loud-speaker.

A second young boy was called to lead a recital similar to our pledge of allegiance.



Mark receives a quiet “*gracias*” as he passes crayons out to the children.

Finally, the girls in the honor guard presented the flag back to the Director. It was a remarkable display of organization and national pride in the midst of a very simple mountain village in rural Guerrero.

With the formalities completed, the Director announced that we had brought a crate of school supplies and asked us if we would present some of the items to the students in the younger grades.

Mark handed each of the youngest students some crayons and each in turn grinned and quietly replied “*gracias*.” Mark and Maria presented the rest of the school supplies to the Director. The crate contained pens, pencils, markers, crayons, notebooks, folders and Spanish-language books and novels. The students were extremely grateful.

The generous donors of these school supplies deserve special thanks. You can be sure as you read this that the children of Achicga are using the supplies you donated, and will continue to do so every day.



Maria Moreno-York stands with some grateful students at the Achicga primary school (left). Maria and Mark arrived just in time to watch the students’ weekly presentation of the flag (right).





Powerless

Mobile power generators make the dental volunteers' work possible, but what happens when they don't cooperate? By Mark Leaman



The El Niño Rey dental clinic has improved substantially over the years with the addition of better lighting and new equipment allowing the dentists to perform more restorative procedures.

Unfortunately, these lights and equipment use more power than the electrical systems in rural Mexico were designed to supply. To overcome this obstacle, we have gradually acquired a small fleet of electric generators to supply our needs.

At the start of this year's second mission trip, each of the generating units was set up and the oil and gas were



Kevin O'Malley, never at a loss for words, offers advice to Dr. Tim McBride, a college roommate of Fr. Matt

topped off. After the units refused to

start, it was agreed that a little more oil wouldn't hurt...right?

As the generators stubbornly sat in silence, word was put out in town that we needed a mechanic. The team was informed that a mechanic indeed lived in town. However, he was away and would not be back until after noon.

The clinic operated with limited power throughout much of the day as we waited for the mechanic. There was more than a little doubt that a qualified mechanic really lived in this tiny dusty village perched on a Mexican mountainside.

At 2 pm, Armando the mechanic arrived and started working on the generators. He quickly diagnosed that some fool had put too much oil in the generators (oops!).

He produced an air compressor - as unlikely as it seemed - and started blowing excess oil out of the engines. Within a few hours, all of the generators were operating

Dr. Jackie Slovic makes great use of the sometimes reliable, occasionally frustrating, but always vital generators.

properly and continued to do so the rest of the week.

When asked how much he owed him, Armando politely refused any payment whatsoever. The mission team agreed that he should be paid, so that evening, Mike Nolan, Patrick Sweeney and Mark Leaman sought him out at his home.

When they found him, Armando and his wife explained that he had worked as a mechanic in Memphis, Tennessee, but he had to come back to Mexico because had not come to the U.S. legally. He continued to insist that he did not need payment for fixing the generators.

Finally, we put 500 pesos (about \$45) in his hand and asked that he please accept it. We knew it was the right thing to do when we saw the proud smile on his wife's face and Armando himself could not suppress a grin.



The Ideal Patient

By Dr. Bob Slovick

My daughter Jackie and I had the privilege of participating in this year's second mission trip. This was my fourth trip, and Dr. Jackie's second.

One particular situation that made a strong impression on many of us involved a girl in the village of Achicga. She was born with a spinal defect, and had already undergone two major surgeries and many smaller procedures. She was not able to stand, but could only kneel or crawl.

Dr. Jackie treated her in the clinic, extracted five of her teeth. The girl then went on to have additional fillings as well. The young girl smiled through the entire appointment, and was an ideal patient.

For most of the day, she stayed by the outdoor cross with her older sister. She enjoyed watching us eat, and all the activity of the mission. As you can see from this picture, she is filled with happiness, even though she has had so many obstacles in her young life.



Dr. Bob and Dr. Jackie's favorite patient (left) with her older sister. Despite five extractions and multiple fillings, the little girl never stopped smiling.

Ode to an Energetic Dentist

By Dr. Bob Slovick

I have had the privilege of working along side Dr. Mike Nolan on two ENR trips. Dr. Nolan is an excellent and skilled practitioner, and provides the citizens of Guerrero with first class dental care. But it is the extra love that Dr. Nolan shows to the people of Guerrero that impresses me the most.

Even after working an eleven hour clinic day, like he did on this year's second trip, Dr. Mike still finds the energy to connect with the local youth.

Whether it is donating sports equipment, putting up basketball nets, spraying kids with water, or chasing them with a mask on, Dr Mike always finds the energy. Imagine the energizer bunny times ten. It is a real joy to see how much he brings to the mission.



Even after working long days in the clinic under less-than-ideal conditions, Dr. Mike always finds the energy to entertain and energize both the ENR team and local community members.

A Team Effort

By Dr. Jim Durso

I am always touched by the warmth and kindness of the people we meet and treat. They wait patiently without complaint. Some walk miles to come for treatment, wait for hours, and then walk all the way back to their homes. Some of these people are seeing a dentist for the first time and, even though they are a bit apprehensive, not knowing what to expect, they

still look up at you with warm, trusting eyes.

I always marvel at how well the team comes together in such a short time, with everyone from the newbies to the grizzled veterans finding a role. Cooperation is the norm with the spirit of our leader Nancy McGovern leading the way. She keeps us organized and fully supplied, and deserves a special thank you.

I am always told by people upon my return, how nice it is for us to give our time and ser-

vice to the people in the villages we visit. What I explain to them is that we take back much more from these kind, giving people than anything we bring to them.

The spirit of God lives within these people, their culture, and the landscapes of Guerrero. We take this spirit back to our own homes, workplaces, and churches. It has a calming effect and our experiences help us to keep a proper perspective for the rest of the year. That is the true gift that we are given.



Xochitebec, Elevation 10,000 Feet

A Reflection by Jerry Nolan

It's the familiar din of activity on a typical clinic day. The portable dental units are humming, providing power to three dental stations in this open-air classroom converted into a temporary dental clinic.

The lights dim when an air pump kicks in to provide suction. The steady pitch of gas generators - placed at a distance to minimize noise and fumes - changes as the machine adjusts to the increased demand for power. Music of all eras plays from the ipod station.

Patients sit along one wall in school chairs, while shoeless boys aim for net-less baskets outside. Across the court, people are lined up in the shade, waiting to be diagnosed for treatment.

Amid the blur of activity, a fearful scream is heard from one of the stations. A young patient needed to be restrained while being treated. She is a pretty young girl who hugged everyone she came across as she entered the room. In her mid-teens, her body is that of an eight-year-old, her mind, a three-year-old. She is there with her *abuela*, her grandmother. She does not speak, but communicates with hugs.

Her fearful screams rise to such volume and pitch, it seems as though time slows. All eyes, patients and volunteers alike, turn to the girl. Dr. Pat Gries holds the girl still, trying to comfort her through the dental treatment.

When the dentist finishes, Pat lets go of her arms. She immediately reaches out and hugs him, wordlessly communicating the need for comfort. Pat returns the hug, communicating so clearly that he is there to give her all the comfort she needs. This moment will be remembered clearly by all who witnessed it.

While on our way back to the clinic from lunch, Fr. Bob, Tom Cusick and I stop by a woman sitting on her porch with her sister. We had heard people speak of the woman's sister, who had been suffering from a lung disorder. Fr Bob, in his dusty shorts and

"scrub" shirt, offers to anoint the woman. He blesses some water and anoints her, healing her spirit and giving her peace of mind.

When our host realizes she has a priest in her house, she asks Fr. Bob to bless each room of her dirt-floored home. "Y la casa de mi hija?" she asks. We then carefully navigate our way down a steep gravel path to bless her daughter's house as she requested.

Healing. Most of the healing we bring to our hosts is apparent. Mouths are made healthy. Medicines for pain and curing are dispensed. Protective sunglasses are provided for field workers. Spiritual comfort and healing are also part of our mission. In witnessing this healing, we ourselves take part in the process.

We take time on our trips to recognize our own good fortune in being able to share in the grace of this year's mission. We pray for and remember to thank all who help facilitate the trip; you are our grace. We pray for our friend Padre Mateo, and for Fr. Foley's safety. We feel comfort and safety knowing we are in the prayers of friends and loved ones back home. We offer thanks for our spouses, and our families who pick up the slack and maybe even miss us while we are away. We remember the St. Norbert community. Without St. Norbert, this would not be possible.



Jerry's daughter Margaret, another ENR volunteer, doing what she likes best: holding a young child as her mother takes her turn in the dental chair



A Very Special Thank You

Over the past ten years, ENR's dedicated dentists and volunteers have been able to treat 8,961 patients, extracting over 10,000 damaged or infected teeth. Without the support of the El Niño Rey community, these individuals' ailments would continue to go untreated.

Thank you to all those who have supported El Niño Rey over the years. Thanks to your generous help, ENR has been able to make a difference in the lives of the men, women and children of rural Guerrero, Mexico.



*Clockwise from upper left:
1) Local ENR staff member Teresa Sanchez Gateca and her assistant register students for their becas (scholarships) while Tom Cusick helps out. 2) Children finish their check-ups with mixed feelings. 3) Fr. Bob, on a mission from God, attempts to move a child with the Holy Spirit. 4) Children look on as their family members receive treatment at the dental clinic.*