



## Volunteers in Medical Missions

October 2010  
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# V I S I O N



The Tanzanian children shook hands with the Mzungu (white person). They gently pinched my pale arms and touched my blond hair.

**I am forever grateful to  
have had this experience.**

by **Briana Perry**  
Burnsville, Minnesota



My medical mission trip to Tanzania in May was incredible! Definitely life-changing! At our clinic we treated 300 to 400 patients each day! We provided the villagers with education regarding nutrition, preventative care, hygiene, and causes of illnesses. We gave out medication, vitamins, reading glasses, harmonicas, baseball caps to block the sun, and much more. Many people did not have shoes, so I gave my own away.


The watolo (children) surrounded us constantly, and would giggle and say Mzungu (which means white person) because many of them had never seen one before. They gently pinched my pale arms and touched my blond hair. I imagine it was quite shocking to them.

The people of both villages were so grateful. They had us take tea with them each morning, and honored and thanked us during their Sunday church service. One man even tried to give us a goat as a gift of thanks for treating him and his family. All of their

songs and phrases praised God for all the blessings He has given them, which was incredibly humbling to me.

I am forever grateful to have had this experience and cannot thank VIMM enough for making the Tanzanian trip a reality for me. What I learned in Tanzania will be a foundation upon which I build my nursing practice when I graduate next spring and begin to provide care to people's loved ones.

We absolutely saved lives, including a seven day old baby boy whose mother died during birth, a malnourished three year old, and many people suffering from malaria.

This safari (journey) was indescribable. Thank you, VIMM, for making this medical mission trip possible for me. I am so grateful that VIMM provides so many opportunities to go out in the world and help others through faith and care. I will definitely be participating in another trip as soon as possible. You have not only changed many lives in Tanzania, but my own as well. 

# The expansive mountain range illustrated God's steadfastness.

by Ashley Harte, MD  
Greenwood, South Carolina

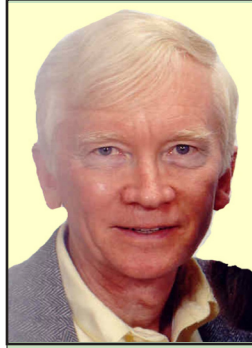


**Dr. Ashley Harte removed a lipoma from the patient's hip that had been there for over ten years. He was very excited to have this done.**

After visiting an expansive mountain range like the Andes, it becomes clear to me why God uses mountains as an illustration over and over again in the Bible. The sheer height (13,000 ft. elevation in Huaraz), raw beauty and steadfastness of the mountains are analogous to the strength that God provided for our team. For our Peru July trip we were quite blessed to have a large group of people from a Peruvian church to minister to all of our patients. Their impact reached much "higher" than we could ever hope to reach with simple medical aid. I was so impressed that the counselors were reaching out to our patients not only on the day we visited, but also they came back a week later to check back on the people we saw. I am humbled by all of the relationships that were formed and strengthened on our trip.

Our team had some sickness of our own during the trip. Those who were sick (myself included) truly ached for every minute we could not spend helping the team. It was then, during our suffering, that God revealed the raw beauty of us as his children in the face of our weakness. In Matthew 9:12 Jesus says, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." For me, I learned more during the hours I could not help the team and instead slept on the bed of the pastor at a church where we held clinic. God showed me during my sickness just how much I need His grace! The bed

*(continued on page 4)*



## From the Director's Desk

by Larry Secret

"Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days." (NEV) Ecclesiastes 11:1

The book of Ecclesiastes has many philosophical and theological reflections on the purpose and meaning of life. Some of these statements are at first glance hard to interpret and require some prayerful meditation, but the reward is often a refreshing insight into our relationship with God and the duties He requires of us.

The directive in the first verse of chapter eleven is perplexing. We are told to cast bread on the water and that it will come back to us after a number of days. This seems to be counterintuitive because casting bread upon the water will ruin the bread. However, the meaning is profound and concerns the whole manner in which we are to approach life. Those who have come to know Christ through faith are to also live by faith. The Apostle Paul quoted the Old Testament when he wrote that "the just shall live by faith".

This concept is not really understood in the world around us. Our generation has become consumed with a pragmatic and materialistic view of life which relegates faith to a Sunday morning service, if it is considered at all. For example, some would say that a short term medical mission outreach is not a wise investment of money or time. Such acts of faith would be seen as placing good bread in water which could only result in the disintegration of the bread. However, Solomon is saying that the reality of our faith is to be demonstrated by our actions and that this will validate our faith - "you will find it after many days".

Casting bread upon the surface of the water could be a step into the unknown - a new culture, a different language, strange food or exposure to a hostile environment. Such a demonstration of faith honors our Lord and produces amazing results. I have often seen complete strangers on a medical mission outreach bond within hours to each other and to the national co-workers. I have also seen desperately ill patients receive needed medical care to which they would not have had access otherwise. Lives have been transformed, mission works established and the gospel clearly presented all because the command to live by faith was taken seriously.

We walk by faith and as we do, our investment is rewarded, the "bread" does return. This is a verse that needs to be considered; perhaps, you will see the need to "cast your bread upon the water" by taking a trip or by sponsoring a team. ✚

# *“If you did it for the least of these, you did it for me.”*

by Nick Ramberg of North Branch, MN  
and Jon Hegler, MD of Hodges, SC

Since our trip to La Esperanza, Honduras, in July we’ve had some time to reflect on the trip to see how it will affect the future. There are many sights and sounds now that will never be forgotten such as seeing the smile of joy and thankfulness spread across a worried mother’s face when given medication to her sick child. We can still hear the children’s laughter as they were given a weiner dog balloon.

As our plane was descending into San Pedro Sula, Honduras, we had difficulty visualizing what the trip would entail. After waiting for hours in customs, I, Jon, ventured into the airport to find lunch with five bucks and limited Spanish. There were quite a few Honduran vendors available, but Wendy’s was the only one scripted in English. Most of the party opted for the last bastion of American cuisine, but the aroma of fresh baked Honduran bread lured me to the bakery across the way. What seemed like a simple task erupted into confusion immediately. When I offered my five dollars for a loaf of bread and a bottle of water, all of the workers behind the counter just looked at me and laughed. It was then that I knew I was in a foreign land.

We traveled to the villages of Togapala, Malguara, San Juan de Tablan, Cacao, and San Caterina throughout our stay, giving medical attention and our gospel witness to all the

people to whom we served. Each clinic began with prayer and a meeting with the local officials. After registration, our Honduran missionary pastor Leo Chavez would share the gospel with all who waited. The women, children, and men listened attentively and ushered up praises to Jesus with the ministry team. The clinic and the pharmacy hummed with communication as individuals and large families were evaluated and treated after being given a package of vitamins and a dose of worm medicine. Despite a few obstacles along the way, over fourteen hundred patients were seen, three hundred and two teeth were extracted, and the seed of Christ was planted in the fertile soils of the

mountains of La Esperanza.

The people we met, the things we experienced, and the times spent together will never be forgotten. Thank you to everyone who has supported us with their time, money, efforts, and prayers. It was an honor to be a part of this mission trip and I, Jon, hope to one day return as a physician myself. At times I wonder if our efforts really made

a lasting difference here. My answer came in a comment from Jessica Skvarch during our team meeting. Her reference to 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 reminded us how important our small role was in the whole body

of Christ. Even though we relieved the pain of a few arthritic joints, eased a child’s earache, and dealt a blow to the endemic Amoeba Hystolitica and Sarcoptes Scabii, our greatest contribution may have been simply to strengthen the influence of the local missionaries through our act of service. Jesus’ words from Matthew 25 still ring softly in my ear, “If you did it for the least of these, you did it for me.”



**Dr. Danny Pike examined a Honduran girl in a rural village near La Esperanza, Honduras.**



**A local dentist who was the son of our host, Dr. Roman Cruz, provided dental care in a mountainous village near La Esperanza, Honduras.**

# Changing Lives in Haiti

by Alberto Marcelin  
Staten Island, New York

My name is Alberto Marcelin and I am Haitian-American. Although the USA has been my home for fourteen years, my life in Haiti is still very much a part of me. When that earthquake struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, despair hit me, but it also rekindled my passion for medicine. As a fourth year medical student I knew that one day I would be able to return and provide much needed medical services to the people of Haiti, but I had no idea that it was in God's plan for me to return much sooner than I anticipated.

It was simple, really. I needed a family medicine elective and AnMed Health seemed like a friendly enough place so I applied. In my personal statement I mentioned that dream of returning to Haiti and the profound effect the earthquake had on me. To my surprise, I received an immediate response from Dr. Stoney Abercrombie accepting my application and going further to invite me to be a part of their August mission trip to Haiti. Thanks to VIMM and AnMed Health, I was offered a full scholarship for the cost of my trip.

On August 12, 2010, we began our mission trip to Haiti. Our team, led by Dr. Abercrombie, was composed of eight doctors, one physician's assistant, three nurses, and two students. Two of us spoke Creole fluently; in addition we hired a few more translators during clinic hours. I was nervous and excited to be a part of the journey. What we found there was shocking, disturbing, and uplifting all at the same time. This was not the Haiti

*(continued on page 5)*



**Alberto Macelin translates for Dr. Micah Howard and patient near Port Au Prince, Haiti.**

## Upcoming Trips

### 2010

|              |                |          |
|--------------|----------------|----------|
| North Africa | Oct. 30-Nov. 8 | \$1,750* |
| Haiti        | Nov. 7-13      | 1,400*   |

### 2011

|           |                |        |
|-----------|----------------|--------|
| Dom. Rep. | Jan. 1-8       | 1,600* |
| Haiti     | Jan. 1-8       | 1,400* |
| Rwanda    | Jan. 19-29     | 2,750* |
| Sudan     | Feb. 23-Mar. 8 | 2,950* |
| Guatemala | Feb. 26-Mar. 5 | 1,760* |
| Ecuador   | Mar. 21-25     | 1,800* |
| Honduras  | Mar. 19-26     | 1,470* |
| Tanzania  | May 2-14       | 3,300* |
| Bolivia   | May 5-14       | 2,050* |
| Peru      | May 28-Jun. 4  | 2,000* |
| Peru      | Jul. 11-20     | 2,300* |
| Honduras  | Jul. 10-17     | 1,700* |
| Nicaragua | Jul. 30-Aug. 6 | 1,650* |

\*Estimated Cost

*Cost is generally based on departure from Atlanta, Georgia.*


Applications and trip information are available on-line at <http://www.vimm.org/>. You must turn off your "Pop Up Blocker" or under "Pop Up Settings" add the VIMM web site as an allowed site.

Please check our web site, <http://www.vimm.org/>, for more trips to be added to the 2011 schedule. Click on the globe on the top right of the screen to see all of the trips.

*(The expansive mountain--continued from page 2)*

was little more than plywood with a sleeping bag and I could not even imagine how anyone could sleep there on a regular basis. I was humbled to experience the firm reality of that pastor's life leading a small church.

It is sometimes funny how things work in other countries. We planned to go to church on Sunday but there was a road race of sorts in the city and we drove around for two hours trying to find a way out. I surely would have given up after 20 minutes but our bus driver was so steadfast in his mission that I didn't even realize that we were going in circles until we had been at it for quite some time. The team banded together and we were singing praise and worship songs the entire way. Instead of visiting a church, we had our own church service in the national park alongside a creek. We even had an unexpected visitor--a donkey followed us to the rock where we sat and stayed with us the whole time we had our devotional.

I think that many who have gone on a mission trip would probably agree that you arrive expecting to give so much to the people that you are visiting, but you generally leave feeling selfish for all the gifts you have received. This trip was no different for me! 

*(Changing Lives in Haiti--continued from page 4)*


that I had left fourteen years earlier. The destruction was disheartening, but I knew that it had been much worse six months ago. Almost everywhere we looked we saw collapsed buildings and rubble. One thing was certain; they needed our help. As I looked around the city, I remembered something I always knew about Haitians. They are a resilient people.

Life there is remarkable. The Haitian's makeshift tents had the appearance of a refugee camp; they slept on rocks covered by sheets. One man said, "When it rains my wife and I have to hold the opposite poles so that the wind does not blow away the roof of our tent." There were no toilets and many of them washed their clothes and food in the same ravines in which they bathed; through these ravines vehicles passed every day. Even so they were always smiling. Many complained that they had not eaten for days and others complained because they couldn't afford to send their children to school. Yet many of them were still smiling – smiling because their lives were spared. We wondered why people had not started to rebuild their brick houses and why they continued to live in tents. Besides the monetary constraints, we found that they were now afraid of brick houses. In the past, brick houses had been seen as a symbol of wealth and power. The earthquake had revealed that even wealth and power are vulnerable to God.

We worked in different cities and settings during our stay and when I saw the numbers of people who came to our make shift clinics each day, I was grateful that I had been given this unique opportunity to give back to my fellow Haitians. I was glad to be able to speak with them in Creole about their medical problems and help them to understand how we could help them. There were so many presentations of conditions that I had read about in my medical school textbooks, but seeing them first hand helped me to understand them better. It also made me sad that many of their problems are common but they have

developed complications because they have no access to regular health care.

We hit the ground working on day one and some days did not get a break. We saw approximately 2,200 people. We were able to assist them in many ways. We provided necessary anti-microbial medications, dental extractions, pediatric care and many other services. At our stations, we split up into groups and patients formed lines to see each group of volunteers, who listened to their medical complaints and provided them with a diagnosis and prescription. Then the patients went to the medicine shack where other volunteers filled their prescriptions. The last two days were especially challenging, because we had to hike thirty minutes up a mountain before we could provide help to some of the most deserving people; but every night the gratitude we felt for being able to help would soften the harsh environment outside. Some of the people we treated kept coming back from day to day to say thank you to the team and asked when we would be returning to help them.

On our first Saturday there, a few of us attended a Haitian church service, and we were overwhelmed by their faith and devotion to God who continued to bless them despite their misfortunes. The team was amazing; we worked together so well. It was almost like we had been together for years. I made great friends on that trip, and I hope that I will have the opportunity to work with them again soon. This whole trip had a profound affect on me. It was truly a life changing, humbling experience. It focused my goal of becoming the best family doctor, so that I can have the opportunity to continue to help underserved communities. I am really thankful to associations like VIMM and especially all the members of this trip for volunteering their time to help those who are less fortunate. I got an amazing opportunity to be a part of a medical mission, and I know it is in God's plan for me to do even more. I can't wait to go back! 

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only to your own  
interests, but also  
to the interests  
of others."  
Philippians 2:4*

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**Golf Tournament on September 15  
was a great success!**



*We are very grateful to our  
sponsors, the players, and  
for all who volunteered  
their time and service. We  
extend a special thanks to  
the tournament committee.  
Our net profit was over  
\$18,000 making this our  
best tournament ever!*

**Our sponsors were:**

- |                             |                                 |
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