

ISHI

INTERNATIONAL SURGICAL HEALTH INITIATIVE



2009: A Grand Idea Becomes Reality; Guatemala Is Proof Of Concept!



The Journey Of A Thousand Miles Begins With A Single Step; Ours Was Guatemala!

Contributed by Asha Bale, MD



The first group of ISHI hikers reaches the top of Pacaya volcano.

International Surgical Health Initiatives (ISHI)'s first surgical mission was to Centro de Salud Clinic Barbara in San Juan Sacatepequez, Guatemala. ISHI teamed up with Partners for Surgery (PFS), a local non - (continued on page 3)

Leonard Mason, MD- The New Guy Comes Through!

Contributed by Asha Bale, MD



Dr. Mason rests on the ascent of the Pacaya volcano.

It was after hearing a grand rounds presentation by Dr. Diego Reino on surgical volunteerism in Ghana that Dr. Leonard Mason decided that he, too, wanted to volunteer internationally. The presentation described a two-week surgical mission in Ghana, which had been the impetus (continued on page 4)

Watch For These Stories and More In The Next Edition:



Haiti Earthquake Relief: ISHI Rises To The Occasion!

On Tuesday, January 12th, 2010, a magnitude 7.0 earthquake devastated Haiti's capitol city of Port au Prince and vast areas surrounding it. 72 hours later, the first of two ISHI teams departed New Jersey to contribute to the recovery efforts.



abc Television's "Tiempo" interviews ISHI surgeons

ISHI surgeons Ziad Sifri and Diego Reino were interviewed by Joe Torres, host of Tiempo and Weekend World News Tonight.



Everyone Wants To Help!

Six year-old Sanaz Samani raises money for Haiti relief and ISHI, proving you're never too young to make a difference!



Speaking Easy On The Frying Pan- 2010 Summer Fundraiser Update

Photos, fundraiser results and much more.



The Journey Of A Thousand Miles Begins With A Single Step; Ours Was Guatemala! *(continued from page 1)*

profit organization who has a good relationship with the local Mayan community.

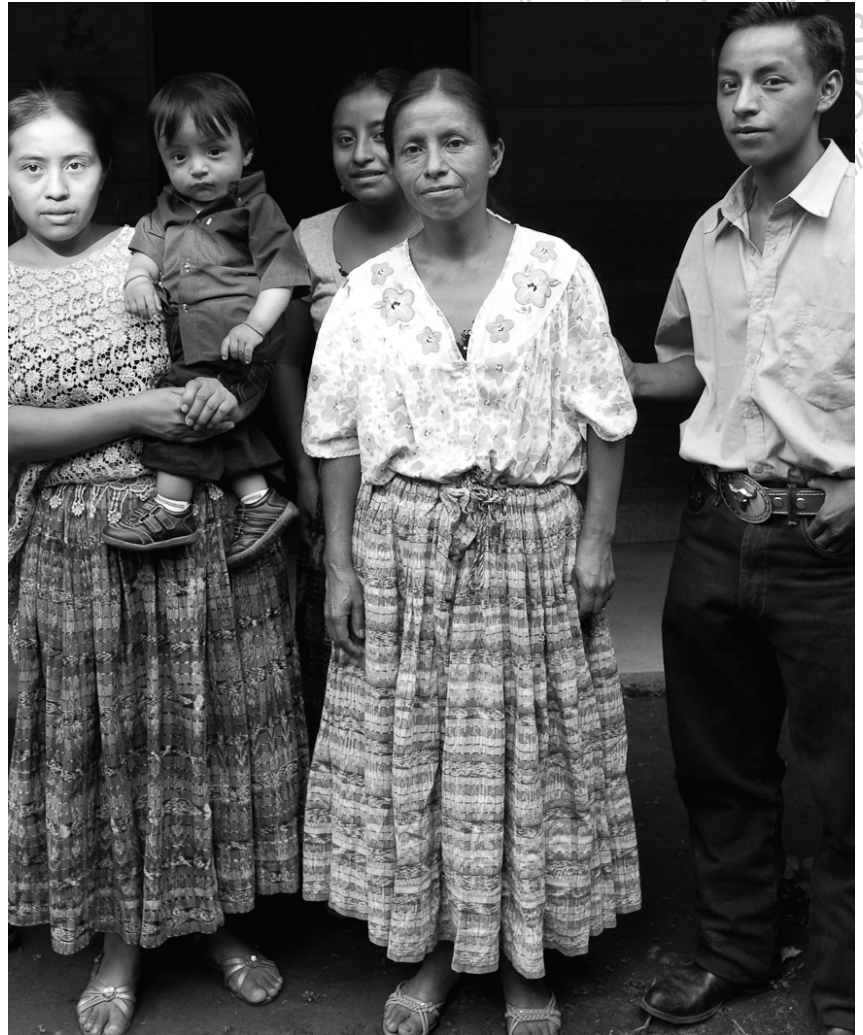
Our team consisted of 20 volunteers- 6 surgeons, 2 anesthesiologists, 7 nurses, 1 nurse anesthetist, 2 auxillary team members, a photographer, and a journalist. We arrived in Guatemala City on October 22 and headed west straight to Antigua, which used to be Guatemala's capital city, and today is known for its beautiful Spanish colonial architecture. Over the next two days we took some time out to enjoy the beauty of the country and learn about Guatemalan history and culture. A short plane ride away, we experienced the history of the ancient Mayans by visiting the ruins at Tikal. Saturday, we challenged ourselves by tackling Pacaya, a nearby active volcano, where roasting marshmallows over the flowing lava became the reward at the end of a physically demanding hike!

After two days of team bonding and fun, our team was ready to get to work! On Sunday October 25th we left Antigua for San Juan Sacatepequez, a small town northeast of Antigua. After a quick stop at Casa Damasco to drop off our bags, we headed for the Centro de Salud Clinic Barbara to triage our patients. The patients had been previously evaluated by PFS volunteers, so only patients deemed to need surgery were sent to us for evaluation. We split into three stations- surgical, anesthesia and booking. 58 patients were seen and examined, of whom 56 were given dates for surgery. Conditions seen included inguinal hernias, ventral hernias, chronic cholecystitis, hemmorhoid disease and soft tissue masses. The nurses in the meantime, unpacked all of our supplies and readied the two operating rooms, which we would be using for the next week.

Monday the 26th- Surgeries began. Patients and family members were housed onsite behind the clinic. They arrived on time, changed into patient gowns and were taken into the operating room for their procedures. After recovering, they were either admitted as inpatients or discharged back to the albergue. Translators were of immense importance as many of the patients spoke a Mayan language, completely different from Spanish. Although the pace was quite fast, the first day of surgery and those to follow ran without any major difficulties. Our team worked efficiently and effectively to accomplish the days' scheduled operations, about 15 per day.

A total of 54 surgeries were performed. Our team was extremely pleased with this accomplishment. Our cooperation with PFS as well as with the local staff at the Clinic, including Dr. Boy the medical director, the nurses, the translators and the students was extremely helpful and enjoyable. The last day we were given certificates of appreciation and welcomed back for 2010!

We concluded our trip by returning to Guatemala City and having our farewell dinner at an Italian restaurant, where we shared stories and distributed awards to our team members. Our flight back to the US was on October 31, a safe return after a thoroughly enjoyable and successful mission.



A patient, after returning home from nearly a week away for gallbladder surgery, finally stands in front of her village home again with her family members.





Leonard Mason, MD- The New Guy Comes Through!

(continued from page 1)

for the formation of ISHI. The challenges of providing surgical care in a harsh third world setting, one with limited resources and an abundance of need, captured Dr. Mason's attention and he signed up for an ISHI mission soon afterwards. Dr. Mason, a second year resident in surgical training at UMDNJ, had never traveled outside of the continental US, but was determined to take up the challenge. "What better way is there to experience other countries than to travel and volunteer at the same time?" he asks.

First step: apply for a passport! After applying for the expedited service, Dr. Mason received his first ever passport a few weeks before the October 2009 mission to Guatemala. His wife Marissa and his family were very encouraging, realizing that this would be a rewarding endeavor. "I knew this would be a good experience. I became a doctor to help people," says Dr. Mason.

Upon arriving for duty at the Clinica de Salud de Santa Barbara in San Juan Sacatepequez, the surgical team of twenty volunteers began the afternoon by evaluating approximately eighty patients to determine which were candidates for surgery. "The biggest challenge was the language barrier when interviewing the patients," says Dr. Mason. The Mayans speak a language called Kekchi, which is not at all similar to Spanish, Guatemala's official language. Speaking to the Mayan patients required two translators, one to translate English to Spanish, and another to translate Spanish to Kekchi. Once the operations began, other challenges included limited availability of surgical instruments and equipment, as well as postoperative analgesic medications. "Every mission is different and you have to be prepared to adapt. Surgical residency teaches you how to adjust to any environment". Despite the very basic working environment, Dr. Mason and his team were able to complete 52 operations in the rural Guatemala clinic during their one week visit.

The patients in San Juan Sacatepequez left a lasting impression on Dr. Mason, a first time international traveler. He says, "The Mayan patients were grateful for even little things. They were thankful. They didn't have anything, but appreciated what little they have. It makes you appreciate what we have here in the 'States'".

Dr. Mason found his experience in Guatemala to be so rewarding that he was inspired to volunteer his skills in other countries as well. In March 2010, he volunteered with ISHI's Haiti earthquake relief efforts, and he's planning to volunteer on future ISHI missions to continue to provide free operations in underserved countries.



(Clockwise from left) Dr. Diego Reino, Dr. Asha Bale, Dr. Leonard Mason and Dr. Chia-Chi Wang work on an emergency patient, a young child with scalding injuries to his lower extremities.





Winners of the Salsa dance competition!

ISHI Fundraiser Leads The Way

Contributed by Diego Reino, M.D.

On August 22, 2009, ISHI hosted its first fundraising event which proved to be a tremendous success. The venue was CUBANU restaurant in Rahway, NJ where 70 of ISHI's closest friends and supporters gathered for an evening of great Cuban food and free salsa dancing lessons generously provided by George and Rosanna Scavino. Some of the evenings highlights included a slide show that detailed a medical mission to Ghana, West Africa, that inspired the creation of ISHI, as well as raffle prizes that included two tickets to a NY Giants regular season football game, which drew in many large donations. All of the proceeds from this fundraiser were directly contributed to the surgical relief mission to San Juan Sacatepequez, Guatemala, that took place in October of 2009. Given the popularity and success of this fundraising event, we can expect "Salsa Night" to be a staple in ISHI's yearly fundraising armamentarium.

A Brief History Of The International Surgical Health Initiative Also Known As ISHI



Contributed by Ziad Sifri, MD

The International Surgical Health Initiative (ISHI) is made up of surgeons, doctors, nurses, journalists, photographers, and other professionals who volunteer their expertise, time and energy, working together under the guiding principle of providing unconditional surgical care to those threatened by surgical disease around the world.

ISHI is dedicated to improving the health of underserved people globally by providing much-needed surgical care and working toward the prevention and treatment of the illnesses that bring about the need for surgery in the first place. Through collaboration with other like-minded organizations, building lasting relationships with patients, families, and communities, and empowering local medical professionals to be self-sustained through education and training, we strive to one day make ourselves obsolete.

ISHI's founding members, surgeons Asha Bale & Ziad Sifri and photographer Vishnu Hoff, first met on a medical mission to Ghana in 2008. They immediately understood the true immensity of need in the world and the value of contributing whatever one is capable of to provide help.

On May 15, 2009, the International Surgical Health Initiative was officially incorporated as a nonprofit organization in the state of NJ, and on September 29, 2009, received its 501c3 tax exempt status. This designation allows the organization to offer tax deductions for the donation of money and goods in support of its mission.

In it's first year of existance, ISHI has already conducted three surgical missions. The first was to the Central Highlands of Guatemala to treat the mostly Mayan population of this region. You can read more about this mission on page 1.

The next two missions were completely unexpected, and were launched in response to the aftermath of the 7.0 magnitude earthquake in Haiti. You can read more about these missions in the next ISHI Newsletter.

ISHI has held one official fundraiser, which can be read about on page 5, and is in the process of organizing another for June 29, 2010.

Currently ISHI has about 25 enlisted volunteers and an executive committee, which meets monthly. ISHI is always looking to recruit new volunteers, both to participate on surgical missions and to help with operations, serve on committees, and to assist with other State-side activities such as fundraising events.

ISHI thanks all the wonderful volunteers who have donated their time and expertise, and is grateful for the generous donations it's received from its many donors. **With all of your support and help, good things *can* happen!**



THANK YOU!

ISHI Thanks Each & Every Volunteer For Contributing Their Time, Money, Expertise, And Enthusiasm To This Organization And The People We Help

San Juan Sacatepéquez, Guatemala- 2009

Alison Baker, Asha Bale, Irene Banares, Kevin Clarke, Mary Ann D'Urso, Socorro Galano-Rogers, Pushpa Goel, Dennis Grech, Vishnu Hoff, Charlie Khoury, Leonard Mason, Natalia McTighe, Leslie Osei-Tutu, Diego Reino, Ziad Sifri, Mae Tingson, Sherine Varghese, Sue Walsh, ChiaChi Wang, Zeina Wakim.

