



INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S SURGICAL FOUNDATION

"Everyone Was Born to Smile"

VOLUME 5 NO. 3

ICSF in Vietnam, Pakistan, and Mexico: A Busy Second Quarter

Vietnam



*Eight-month old Nguyen
before surgery*

ICSF's April 2010 surgical mission in Hai Phong, Vietnam, coincided with Dr. Geoff Williams' 12th anniversary of volunteer service in Vietnam. "Vietnam holds a special place in my heart. I served my first volunteer mission there, and it was a group of 180 desperate Vietnamese mothers who inspired me to come to the developing world full-time," comments Dr. Williams.

On one of those first missions Dr. Williams met Dr. Tram Anh, an oral surgeon who wanted to learn about cleft surgery. Over the fol-



*Nguyen after surgery for a
bilateral (two-sided) cleft lip*

lowing years, Dr. Williams watched that teacher-student relationship blossom into a colleague-colleague relationship. "It is a delight to watch my former student perform life-changing cleft surgery and train her own students," adds Dr. Williams.

"This is one of the things that makes ICSF unique," says Dr. Williams. "We teach the local doctors to take care of their own people. After all, they, the local doctors, are the ones in the best position to be there for their patients all year round."

Pakistan

Karachi, Pakistan, saw 32 children and young adults receive free surgery from ICSF in May. Of note, five of these patients were in their thirties, never having had previous surgery.

"While it is a tragedy that anyone should have to go throughout their entire childhood

(Continued on page 2)



Pakistani baby before (left) and after (above) surgery

Pakistan *(continued from page 1)*

and most of their young adulthood with a terrible facial deformity, I was deeply honored to be the one who was finally able to fix their problem," Dr. Williams recalls.



Acute burn patient

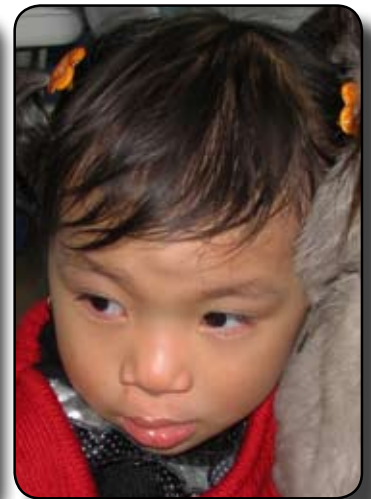
Mexico

In ICSF's June mission to Mexico, the emphasis was on treatment of children with acute burns in Hospital de la Ninez Oaxacaquenes (Oaxacan Children's Hospital). ICSF is the only overseas volunteer surgical organization that routinely helps in pediatric acute burns — one of many of ICSF's unique features.

Pudgie's Surgery Delayed

Three-year-old "Pudgie" (a nickname given by her mother) came for follow-up surgery to the April ICSF mission at the Hai Phong, Vietnam, Children's Hospital after having her cleft lip repaired by Dr. Williams one year earlier. Unfortunately, Pudgie did not look at all well. She had a cough and a fever. As it sometimes happens, a child's surgery has to be cancelled for fear of trouble with the anesthesia and recovery due to the acute illness. And so was the case with Pudgie. Fortunately, however, Dr. Tram Anh, trained by ICSF, will be able to do the surgery at another time, so Pudgie and her mother will not have to wait for the next ICSF mission.

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Pudgie in April 2009 (left) before surgery, and at the ICSF mission in April 2010 (right), when she was ill with a fever

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Please log on to our Website at: icsfoundation.org, and make a tax-deductible donation, or use the enclosed donor slip to send a check today, so that we can continue to provide "The Gift of a Smile."

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

'Masai Mother'



Nyuri and her baby at the hospital

The Serengeti Plain of eastern Africa is one of the most remote regions of the world. Although it is untamed, remarkable organization exists there. Animals migrate to and fro, prompted by nature's signals---and all is well, year after year.

But one day, something was not right in the Serengeti. A baby boy was born into a family, with a rent in his face, a cleft lip and palate. Nyuri, his mother, was beside herself with grief. It seemed to her that the perfection with which nature normally ruled was suddenly all wrong. Even the wild animals, it seemed to her, took notice that something was amiss, and were sad as they wandered by her small village.

When her son was eight months old, Nyuri's husband made a trip to the city, Nairobi, in search of help. Although Nyuri had never been to Nairobi, she felt that something hopeful would be gained there. When Nyuri's husband returned some time later, it was with good news. On the outskirts of Nairobi, he had stumbled across a small hospital, Metropolitan Hospital, which just happened to have a cleft lip and palate program. The cleft doctor was Dr. Kimani Wanjeri, a plastic surgeon who had been trained and helped in starting his cleft center by an organization known as ICSF.

As soon as arrangements were made, the little Masai family began their journey on the goat trail that was their link to the only sign of civilization within miles, a paved, but rutted and pot-holed and rarely-traveled road that eventually led to the hospital. Upon arrival at the hospital, Nyuri's baby, who did not have a name yet, was promptly scheduled for surgery, all at no cost to the family.

I happened to be visiting and working at the hospital during this time and was invited by Dr. Wanjeri to take part in the surgery. As I scrubbed my hands in preparation for surgery, I contemplated the serendipity that had led me, a Westerner accustomed to all the amenities and complexities of modern life, to this small baby from a remote part of the world. As the operation began, Dr. Wanjeri and I made note of the complexities of the baby's deformity. We knew that the commonly-advertised 45 minutes operating time would not be nearly enough to do this baby justice. During the operation, I felt a degree of sacredness and perhaps a guiding hand on our shoulders. We knew that after our work was finished, every detail of the baby's face would be studied by his mother and would represent the modern world to the Serengeti for the rest of the baby's life. The family's level of sophistication was irrelevant to us.

After the surgery, I decided to proceed to the young family's hospital bed. I was curious about the expression I would find on the young mother's face, as she had previously not looked me in the eyes or shown any emotion whatsoever, perhaps fearful of the new environment around her. As I opened the small curtain shielding the bed, I saw a beaming mother, her eyes glued on her baby's face. Her smile was bright and unyielding. As I could have predicted, Nyuri did not acknowledge my presence but remained riveted, connecting eye-to-eye with her now whole baby. The young father, also beaming, reached up to shake my hand.

As my plane left Nairobi a few days later, I imagined Nyuri returning with her baby to her part of the Serengeti, their lives changed forever. As I strained to see the horizon where Nyuri's village might be, I thought, "Now, even the giraffes and Thomson gazelles will be at peace."

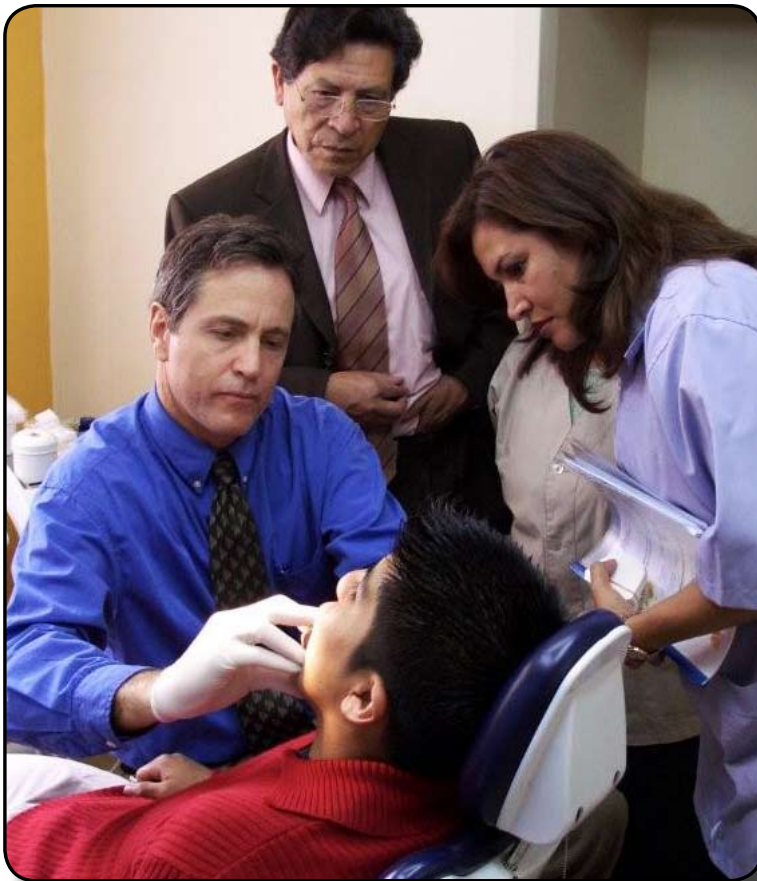
Dr. Geoff Williams

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Nyuri and her husband with their baby



Recent ICSF missions in Bolivia and other countries have exemplified what makes ICSF's goals unique. Not only has the ICSF team, led by Dr. Geoff Williams (left, in blue; above, back right), been involved in the surgical work and follow-up care, but the team has worked with local physicians and other professionals to provide ongoing care.

Furry Friends for Children

Pat Hromiko was one of the busiest, most helpful people in her community in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She was a professional nurse, a mother, and a tireless volunteer at church. She taught classes, decorated home and church for the various seasons, and raised a family of bright, energetic children. She and her husband, Larry, had a good life, and liked to share the joy.

Then she suffered a debilitating illness that disrupted her ability to communicate and to care for herself or others. Instead of being the caregiver, she became the one receiving care. She battled not only her new disabilities, but also the depressing realization that any improvement took years of enormous effort and therapy. It was devastating for a woman who had defined herself as a helper to be the one who needed, and might always need, help.

When she heard that ICSF can use donations of small, new stuffed toys to comfort children undergoing surgery, she saw something she could do. She rallied her many friends and her church community, and soon had collected more than 100 small, furry friends to send to ICSF. This volunteer band of tiny, fuzzy friends would go to children around the world.

And Pat's take-home message? No matter how limited you may feel, there's always something you can do to help others.



ICSF's 'volunteer' bear, lion, whistler, penguin, and buffalo