



INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S SURGICAL FOUNDATION

"Everyone Was Born to Smile"

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ICSF Increases its Reach, Serves Inaugural Mission to Guatemala

Maria Jose Tager did not know if what she was looking for existed. As the head of International Relations for the Pediatric Foundation of Guatemala, she wanted to find a volunteer organization that would come to Guatemala and not just perform free surgery but do so with great care and precision — and take care of the patients as they healed after surgery. She and her foundation cared deeply about the children of Guatemala, and they didn't want them to receive rushed surgeries or little or no aftercare.

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Patients and families filled the entire first floor of the hospital on the first day of ICSF's first Guatemala City mission.

Inaugural mission to Guatemala

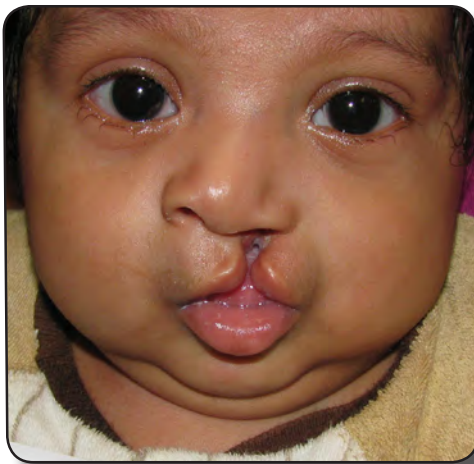
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In August 2014, Maria was searching the Internet and found the organization she had wished for, the International Children's Surgical Foundation. The newly-found organization did not talk about numbers but rather about the importance of time and quality in treating poor children from poor countries.

Maria wasted no time in contacting ICSF President and Medical Director Dr. Geoff Williams to make an inquiry. Dr. Williams recalls, "I was thrilled that a country's premier pediatric foundation would deliberately seek us out because of the way we take care of our patients."

After a brief visit to Guatemala City a few weeks later, to make sure that the hospital was safe and had all that was needed, the mission was scheduled. In May, ICSF conducted its first mission to Guatemala, providing free surgery to children with cleft lips and palates and similar deformities. ICSF team member Heidi Davies, a surgical assistant living and working in Boise, Idaho (and also a native Guatemalan), commented: "I experienced a life-changing event. Through ICSF I established life-long friendships and fell in love with our patients! Thank you Dr. Williams!" I look forward to working with you once again!"

After the completion of the mission, Maria Tager told Dr. Williams how much the Guatemala Pediatric Foundation appreciated the unusually high standard of care given to the patients and invited ICSF to come back again. Dr Williams, of course, said, "Yes."



Three-month-old Vladimir before surgery (above) and one week after surgery (right)



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A Tale of Two Rosemaries

The first Rosemarie was 11-year-old Rosemarie Alcuernon. When I first saw her she looked like she had been extracted from a subterranean dump. Her hair was tattered and hanging partially over her face, although it did not hide her permanent scowl. Her cleft was particularly unsightly, and I am sure she had been teased and scorned mercilessly. Rosemarie was one of the few patients I have encountered who seemed like she may be beyond hope.



Rosemarie No. 1

Rosemarie's surgery was a little over 3 hours, in keeping with ICSF's goal of treating every child with the highest care possible. As I expected, Rosemarie was very uncooperative and sullen after surgery.

I took some comfort, however, in knowing we had done our best.

When the weekend arrived I felt sorry for the eight patients and their parents (including Rosemarie and her father) who would have to pass the time in the hospital. So, on that Saturday night, the team and I decided to get ice cream, soda, and balloons for a little party to help the patients and their families break the boredom.

At first, Rosemarie didn't want to have any part in the festivities. I got a little flash of inspiration, however, and asked all of our Filipino nurses to, one at a time, take a picture of Rosemarie with their cell phones and then show her the picture and tell her that she was "beautiful." (Even though she needs further surgery, I actually thought Rosemarie *was* beautiful after surgery, with a nice full lip that most Western girls would be envious of.) At first Rosemarie refused to look at the photos, and when told that she was beautiful she violently shook her head "No." After several unfruitful attempts by the nurses, I noticed a change. Rosemarie began to study the pictures of herself and quit shaking her head "No." She started gazing longer at the photos and then smiled shyly.



Rosemarie after surgery

By the end of the party Rosemarie was running around with a smile so big that I worried about her recent lip surgery coming apart. She seemed particularly interested in interacting with us and the other kids. That night, as we said goodbye and left, guess who was the last remaining person waving to us through the glass door. Right. . . it was little Rosemarie.

As we walked away I realized that I had witnessed a miraculous, almost instantaneous, transformation of self-esteem from the lowest possible level to an outgoing, happy child, all right before my eyes in a single evening. Her name was still Rosemarie Alcuernon---but she was now another person. She was now a Rosemarie with a bright future. The little dump-dweller was gone, replaced by Rosemarie No. 2 — with the brightest smile imaginable.

Thank you, ICSF's supporters, for making Rosemarie's miraculous transformation possible and for all the other transformations you have made possible.

Yes, everyone, including Rosemarie, "was born to Smile."

Geoff Williams, President

Dr. Geoff Williams

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Philippine Province Thanks ICSF by Legislative Resolution

In April, when ICSF completed one of its largest missions to date, serving 56 children in the Philippine Province of Zamboanga Del Norte, no one knew it would end up in the annals of the provincial parliament.

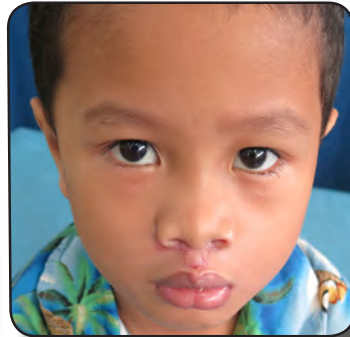
ICSF President Dr. Geoff Williams recounts, "Provincial governor Roberto Uy had been overflowing with thanks and praise after the marathon four-week mission, telling our team that we had played a large part in the well-being of the needy people of his province. Therefore, it was no surprise to receive an official-looking envelope from the Philippines at my home a few weeks later. What was surprising was to read the contents, a very formal resolution of thanks from the Provincial Parliament":

"WHEREAS, the province of Zamboanga del Norte, together with its entire populace, especially those who have benefited the act of kindness of the said medical team (ICSF), has greatly appreciated its benevolence:

WHEREFORE, this Body unanimously agrees to express its sincere appreciation to the humanitarian effort performed and shown by the International Children's Surgical Foundation (ICSF) to the people of Zamboanga del Norte."



12-year-old Maryann before surgery (left) and at age 14 two years after surgery (right). The ICSF team discovered that Maryann had not been brushing her teeth. The team then went with Maryann to a store where she picked out five toothbrushes and a family-sized tube of toothpaste, all bought by the team.



6-year-old Jhoarrine before surgery (left) and one week after surgery (right).



4-year-old Lyza before surgery (left) and two years after surgery (right).