

OP WALK TALK

-A PUBLICATION FOR THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF OPERATION WALK DENVER

WINTER 2007

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OPERATION WALK DENVER RETURNS TO PANAMA!

Peggy Kettler

On January 19, 2007, our team of 55 volunteers returned to Panama City, Panama. We had left behind so many who needed care during our trip last April. What a sense of accomplishment to be able to return to complete the task we had started nine months earlier.

On January 20th, the OpWalk Denver surgical and medical team examined and screened 75 potential patients for total joint replacement surgery. Even in developing countries, like Panama, our team never compromises the decision-making process when determining which patients can safely undergo surgery. Each patient is carefully scrutinized based on a disability and health risk scale.

Out of the seventy-five men and women screened, we were able to operate on over forty people. Sixty total joint replacement surgeries were performed.

All seventy-five people waited with their family and friends for word from the internists and surgeons of Operation Walk Denver. This evaluation process takes close to five hours to complete. At last the selections were made and the youngest patient, a thirty year old to the oldest patient, an eighty-three year old had looks of relief and anticipation when they were finally chosen.

Some patients had been postponed for medical reasons during our first trip to Panama. Now, due to our medical recommendations, they were healthy enough to receive their new hip or knee on this trip.

Later that afternoon, a follow-up clinic was held. We hoped to see the fifty-one patients from our last mission. What a joy to see the smiling faces of the returning patients!

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A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear friends of Operation Walk Denver,

The New Year has begun with another successful mission to Panama City, Panama. During the week of January 19-26, 2007, sixty total hip and knee replacements were completed on patients afflicted with severe arthritis!

Many of these people have such severe arthritis that they would have received joint replacement a decade ago in the United States. The longer they live with advanced arthritic changes, the worse the joint destruction becomes and the more challenging it is for us. I learn so much from these tough operations that it improves my surgical skills each time I go.

One of the highlights of each mission includes the hugs and smiles of the many appreciative patients we cared for in our past visits. Our patients, and their families are so overjoyed by the life-changing healing they are experiencing, they are sharing their joy with others. These patients then encourage others to have their joints replaced. It is exciting to see the momentum that is building in Panama as more people become aware of Operation Walk Denver.

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OPERATION WALK DENVER RETURNS TO PANAMA!

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One gentleman, Sebastian, highlighted in our Summer 2006 newsletter, was at the front of the line. "Remember me?" he asked. He looked ten years younger. Standing tall and proud with a smile from ear to ear, his outstretched arms broadcast his gratitude.

Many familiar smiling people stood extending their hands to shake or their arms to embrace us as we called their names. Each person wanted to convey their appreciation. Everyone jumped at the chance to stand up, walk and even show us a few dance steps.

Our lovely Mirna was there to tell the new patients and returning patients the story of her bilateral hip replacement success. She was also eager to share with everyone the special trip she made to the United States last September as our guest.



Words simply cannot convey the joy, the excitement and the wonder that we saw on the faces of grateful patients and their families. It is such a privilege to participate on these missions with OpWalk Denver. If you would like to become more involved, please read the article "How Can I Help." Our patients' smiles will be more than enough reward!



Meet Stephanie Clements, DPM



Stephanie Clements, 9News' Medical Reporter, has been involved with Operation Walk Denver for the past few years. She first became involved when she interviewed Dr. Dennis about his Rocky Mountain Musculoskeletal Research Lab.

Their relationship grew into a "working" relationship." In fact, Dr. Dennis was included in a "segment" of her very successful "Baby Boomers" series.

When OpWalk began to put together a Development Board in late 2005, Stephanie was one of the first people asked to join the fledgling board. Since then, Dr. Steph has been an active Board member and a wonderful asset. Last September, she graced the stage as the Walk of Dreams Gala's Master of Ceremonies.

This January, Dr. Steph flew with OpWalk to Panama to get a firsthand glimpse at the incredible work that was being done. She spent hours learning about the patients during clinic, observed the surgeons in the OR, and followed a few patients through the entire process from clinic through physical therapy.

Dr. Stephanie Clements passion and professionalism as a volunteer board member and team member has shone through all she has done.

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

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In addition, William Deaton, US Ambassador to Panama visited the hospital to see Operation Walk in action. We then received a personal invitation from Ambassador Deaton to visit his home one evening to honor our team members. He was so impressed with our mission that we can expect continued dialogue toward working together to help more Panamanians in the future.

Lastly, I want to express my sincerest thanks. First I want to thank my Operation Walk Denver team who worked tirelessly to help so many patients. Special thanks must also be given to Porter Adventist Hospital, who donated many of our supplies and to Depuy, a Johnson and Johnson Company for providing us with all of the total joint implants.

Most importantly, I want to thank you - our generous former patients and friends, whose charitable contributions enabled us to ship over eight tons of cargo, send over fifty volunteers and cover the endless costs that are involved in travel to international sites. Without your help, our missions would not be possible.

Sincerely,
Douglas A. Dennis, MD
Executive Director
Operation Walk Denver

Ambassador William Deaton, Dr. Dennis,
Panamanian President Torrijos,
Dr. Saldana and Dr. Thomas Thornhill



How Far Would You Walk?



The very last day of our most recent trip to Panama, making our final rounds, a breathless man came bounding up the stairs into the Santo Tomas Hospital. With tears in his eyes, he wrapped his arms around Dr. Miner, overcome with relief that he had made it in time to see us.

During a political rally in the upheaval of Panama in the early 1980's, Abdy, just a teenager, received a gunshot wound to his hip. He hobbled in pain, carrying the bullet in his hip for twenty-five years! On our mission last April, Abdy finally received his total hip replacement.

Word had traveled to his hometown that Operation Walk was back. So Abdy did everything he could to make it to the hospital while our team was still there. The sheer joy of his freedom from pain was so great that he wanted to find some means to return to Panama City. He traveled several days via bus and on foot, to tell us "thank you" and to demonstrate to us how well he could walk.

After hugs and smiles, captured on camera, Dr. Todd Miner promised to send a copy of the photos to Abdy. But, when asked how to reach him, he gave a puzzled look. He explained, through an interpreter, that he did not have a street address, he did not have a mailbox, and he had no phone. This is just the way it is.

Abdy may never see the photos, but when he walks by a window or stands in front of a mirror he sees himself standing, walking and running pain free at last.



How Can I Help?

We are frequently asked, "What can I do to help?" This question is heard most often upon our return from a mission. Here are some ways to get involved in supporting Operation Walk Denver.

- ◆ Share our story with friends and associates who have your spirit of philanthropy.
- ◆ Consider being a sponsor of our Walk of Dreams Gala through your corporation or as an individual.
- ◆ Join our Events committee and help us with live auction items. We would love to have fresh ideas.
- ◆ Share information/contacts you have for securing discounts on airline travel and/or hotel stays.



- ◆ Are you planning on upgrading your laptop? We are looking for 2 or 3 used laptops for mission use "in-country."
- ◆ We also need office supplies:
 - * We use rolls and rolls of packing tape. Two or three tape guns would help our packing efforts.
 - * Each trip we need 2 large 'whiteboards' on which to write operating schedules and patient information.
 - * Sharpie pens and copy paper are indispensable.

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How Can I Help?

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- ◆ Are you finished with your walker or crutches? We are currently collecting these items for future trips.

The costs of travel, lodging, food, implants, tools, medicines, dressings, other medical supplies, and then the shipping of all this cargo can cost up to \$100,000 per mission. Here is another lasting way you can help us:

- ◆ Consider making a monthly pledge to Operation Walk Denver.

You can be assured that your help and participation are invaluable in bringing this mission to those in need around the world.

Did you find one or more items on this list that interested you? Contact Sandy Daniel at 303.715.7605 or email her on sandydaniel@centura.org. She will help you match your interests with our mission.



THE WALK OF DREAMS

Remember to
Save the Date
The Walk of Dreams Gala

September 29, 2007
Grand Hyatt Denver
Join us at 6:00 p.m.

Be watching for more details
coming soon!

