

# OP **WALK** TALK

A PUBLICATION FOR THE FRIENDS OF OPERATION WALK DENVER



## A GAME OF DODGEBALL

by James Boyle, *Medical Coordinator*

You may remember playing dodgeball or any other childhood game in which there was a process of two captains carefully choosing players in an attempt to build the ‘better’ team. You may remember the feeling of joy if you were one of the early picks and the feeling of disappointment, sadness or frustration if you were one of the last picks, or perhaps not picked at all. Although it is easy to focus on the priority of players picked, how do you think the team captains felt having to choose among his or her classmates and friends and have to look at everyone’s reactions when they were picked or not?

I’m always asked, “How do you select your patients on an Operation Walk mission trip?” Actually it is not far off from those days in the schoolyard. However, instead of selecting on the basis of athletic ability, friendships and good looks, we rely on medical conditions, disability, severity of disease and cultural demand. It is never easy, and downright stressful, anytime a person or team is given the responsibility of choosing whose life will soon be changed for the better and whose lives will have to wait another year to be considered a surgical candidate. Yes, we can give parameters, limits and boundaries based on a number of medical factors for our selection process, however most of the time it comes down to simple math. (If Dick has 200 patient names and Jane only needs 70 patient names, how does Dick tell the other 130 patients to go home?). One of the most important priorities, even before all the x-rays and medical data is reviewed, is cultural demands. I have met with many Medical Directors in the different countries we have visited only to be told by some that the youngest are their top priority since they can contribute more to the work force and economy. Other countries have told me the exact opposite, urging us to select the elderly population out of respect. And then begins the guessing game. Who do we think will be a better surgical candidate, who will be least likely to have a post operative complication, and who will get the most benefit out of their new joint replacement.

So it comes down to a game of dodgeball, hoping as a captain you pick a good team of patients that will do well, be successful and not get hurt during the game. So what do we tell the patient who doesn’t get selected?

You look at them with all the sincerity and compassion you possess and try to express that we do understand you hurt. We can only envision the suffering you experience every day of your life. We can try to imagine the pain that robs you of a normal functioning and fruitful life, but it is probably even harder for you to accept that there are other fellow countrymen that need this operation more than you do. And with the notion of delivering some hope to mend their broken hearts and dreams, you ask them to pray. Pray for your friends and neighbors who were fortunate enough to be selected. And pray for yourselves, that next time your blood pressure won’t be too high, that your heart rate won’t be too fast, or that your blood sugar will be normal, so that when we return, we may give YOU the gift of WALK!



**WALK**  
OPERATION WALK DENVER  
*restoring the joy of walking*

Rocky Mountain  
Adventist Healthcare Foundation  
+ Centura Health.

## RECORD GIFT TO ENDOWMENT

A campaign to build a \$4.2M endowment, a permanent fund that will earn a guaranteed 6% interest from Adventist Health Systems, in support of Operation Walk Denver, was begun in 2008. It was created to ensure the future of this important program so that people in developing countries like Panama, Dominican Republic and, possibly soon, Guatemala, could continue to receive the gift of walking through life-altering joint replacement surgery.

It is impossible to measure the impact that Operation Walk Denver has had on people in developing countries: a man's grateful tears because he can walk again and return to work to support his family; a young woman's new baby that she considers a miracle because her ability to experience the joy of motherhood is only possible because of the corrective hip surgery she received.

Many stories, just like these, are what inspired one family who wish to remain anonymous, to follow their heart, inspired by faith and family, to give a gift of \$500,000 to the endowment campaign. We are overwhelmed by their generous spirit and although they wish to remain anonymous, they would like the contribution made known in the hopes that it might motivate others to give to the significant work that Operation Walk is doing around the world. Everyone involved with Operation Walk Denver extends their heartfelt thanks for this extraordinary gift!

*For more information about Operation Walk, please contact Jackie Greene at 303-715-7605.*



## A NOTE FROM THE BOARD CHAIRMAN

by Todd M. Miner, M.D., *Board Chairman, Operation Walk Denver*

**T**hese are trying times. Many people have been pre-occupied with numerous challenges at work and home. Because of these challenges, we have been faced with making changes to adapt to the environment

Now, more than anytime in the past, it is clear just how important the hard work and caring by the team members of Operation Walk Denver is. Many on our mission trip team (nurses, therapists, OR technicians) donate one of their two weeks of vacation each year to work long days caring for people in less privileged countries stricken with severe arthritis. They work tirelessly for 12-14 hours per day to help their brothers and sisters from these countries to get back on their feet and walk again. From each team member I hear the common sentiment 'the smiles and hugs from the patients and their families are far more fulfilling than any monetary reward they receive for work at home'.

During difficult times it is increasingly evident how important it is to give what we can to others who do not have access to the same level of care that we have at home. It is too easy to take for granted that we can get in our cars and drive to our doctors/hospitals. Many of the people we care for on our mission trips must walk (painfully) considerable distances just for the chance to have their arthritic hip or knee surgically corrected. On our mission trip in April 2009 one gentleman, Abdy Hurtado, walked 7 miles from his home in a desolate part of Panama City just to say 'thank you' to me for replacing his arthritic hip 2 years earlier. It was an overwhelming and life-changing moment for me.

We all have the opportunity to volunteer in some capacity to help others who are less fortunate. There is hardly a greater gift to give than to allow someone to walk again by replacing their arthritic hip or knee. We just have to take a moment and look past our own concerns/needs and realize that our current difficulties often pale in comparison to someone who cannot walk or provide for their family due to severe arthritis. We all can help. We can volunteer our time or give financial support to Operation Walk Denver so that this very important work can continue. Now more than ever I am proud of and grateful for the caring and hard work of the Op Walk team members.

**Panama City, Panama, April 23-30, 2009**

### Operation Walk Denver Experienced Another Successful Trip To Panama City

**O**ur most recent visit to Panama City, Panama allowed us to assist in the development of a new chapter of Operation Walk. After participating in several previous trips, Dr. Robert E. Booth, Jr., Dr. Jason Cwik and Michelle Anderson, PA-C were determined to develop a team based in their home town, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. They invited a core team of individuals with the skills and enthusiasm necessary to face the challenge.

It is an important part of our mission to teach others, not only in the hosting country, but also other volunteers so that the outstanding work of Operation Walk expands and evolves. It is an honor for Operation Walk Denver to provide the leadership to open the door and pave the road for new

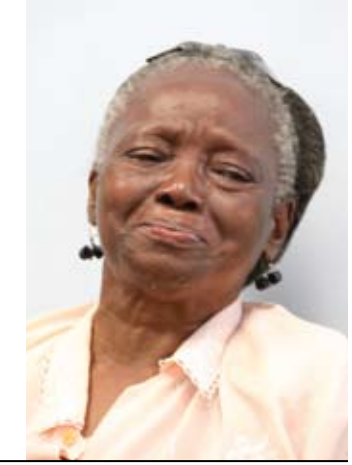


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**Panama City, Con't. from pg. 2**

teams. We provide instruction and guidance in all the departments concerned, from the cargo room to the sterilization of instruments, every individual is essential to the efficiency and success of our mission.

On this trip, we were able to perform 78 total joint replacements and help restore hope to many suffering people. We were once again greeted with open arms by Dr. Ariel Saldana and the staff of Santo Tomas Hospital. The First Lady of Panama, Mrs. Vivian Fernandez de Torrijos visited with our team and provided the patients and their families with a luncheon on our final day. Tears of gratitude and smiles of appreciation once again increase our determination to plan a return to this wonderful country.



# The 2009 Walk of Dreams



**Saturday, September 12, 2009**

**Marriott Denver City Center**

1701 California Street

**6 pm** 🍹 Cocktails

**7 pm** 🍽️ Dinner

**9 pm** 🎵 Entertainment

Tropical Cocktail Attire

**Entertainment by:**

Kahuna Beach Party

**For information  
on registration or  
sponsorships:**

Call Rocky Mountain Adventist Healthcare Foundation  
at 303.715.7600

[www.operationwalkdenver.org](http://www.operationwalkdenver.org)



**TO BENEFIT:**



**SPONSORED BY:**

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Supporting Adventist Healthcare in the Rocky Mountain Region

# Donor Spotlight

## Depuy Proves It's Not Just About Cash

We all know how important individual donations are in making Operation Walk Denver successful. Without this support, it would be impossible to accomplish the things we do. In addition to individual contributions, another extremely important type of gift is in-kind donations. This is a gift of a product or a service in lieu of cash made typically by an organization.

During this most recent trip to Panama, the team replaced 78 hip and knee joints. The joints used in these surgeries were provided by DePuy Orthopaedics as a gift in-kind. Take a moment to think about the lives changed by such a generous gift. The Operation Walk Denver volunteers would not be able to truly impact people's lives without this incredible in-kind support. We are so very grateful for the generosity and support of Depuy.

If you, someone you know, or a business you are associated with would like to make a gift in-kind donation to help support Operation Walk Denver, please have them contact the Foundation office at 303-715-7600.

Operation Walk Denver is a not-for-profit volunteer organization and relies heavily on contributions to fulfill its mission of restoring the joy of walking to people in developing countries. Because it is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization as defined in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, gifts made qualify as charitable contributions for income tax purposes. Gifts in any amount are most appreciated.

To make a gift or to learn more about Operation Walk Denver, please contact Jackie Greene at 303-715-7605 or [jacquelinegreene@centura.org](mailto:jacquelinegreene@centura.org) or visit our website at [www.opwalkdenver.org](http://www.opwalkdenver.org).

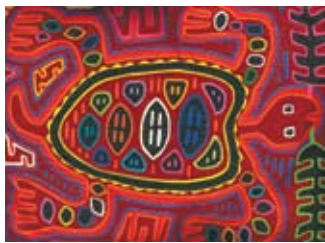
**Thank you for your support!**

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 Centura Health.

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