

# OP *Walk* TALK

A PUBLICATION FOR THE FRIENDS OF OPERATION WALK DENVER

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## THANKS FOR COMING *The 2009 Walk of Dreams*

As a not-for-profit organization, we rely heavily on support from our community. We are overwhelmed by the support we received on Saturday, September 12, 2009, at the Marriott Denver City Center when nearly 250 came out for the 4th annual Walk of Dreams event benefiting Operation Walk Denver. It was a great evening, fun as well as informative. We hope you had a great time and if you came wanting to learn more about our work, we hope we were able to give you just a small glimpse into what we do – restoring the ability to walk for people in developing countries who may not otherwise get the opportunity.

You gave generously at the Walk of Dreams and, thanks to your participation, we raised more than \$112,000! This is an increase from last year and is enough to finance one of the two annual trips next year! This is a labor of love for all of us involved with Operation Walk Denver. You should feel wonderful because your gifts will go directly to performing life-changing surgeries for people with debilitating arthritis and degenerative joint conditions, as well as to educate physicians and medical personnel in these countries on medical procedures so they can continue this work in their own communities. We also train physicians in other cities and states who wish to start their own Operation Walk chapters, so more and more people in developing countries experience the “joy of walking.”

We realize that now, more than ever, people and organizations must be selective with their charitable giving dollars, and we can't begin to express how much we appreciate that you choose to support Operation Walk Denver. From everyone at Operation Walk, we sincerely thank you!

Happy Holidays!





## NEWS FLASH: OP WALK DENVER'S BABY UP FOR ADOPTION!

by Jim Boyle, *Operation Walk Denver Medical Coordinator*

I have been part of Operation Walk Denver since its birth and have traveled to many places, including Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Dominican Republic. However, there has been one place that we have consistently returned to and have developed a special bond with. That place is Panama. Our first trip to Panama was about five years ago with some members of the Los Angeles team. At that time we were just neophytes in the Operation Walk world and were absorbing all we could from the more experienced LA team. Over the years, we carefully worked at creating an efficient environment at the hospital there, as well as with our team and the Panamanian staff. It became evident that Panama became our "baby." Each year, we completed an extremely successful mission, with over 60 joint replacements done each time. We cultivated a well oiled machine (most of the time) and held up our promise to the President and First Lady of Panama that we would continue to return every year.

The true essence of mission work is primarily to provide humanitarian relief. Secondly, it is to encourage and support other teams who have the energy, compassion and determination to form their own chapter. This will hopefully continue the 'ripple effect' of providing the gift of WALK. Our objective: Provide nurturing support to the Philadelphia team so they may gain the confidence, leadership and organization skills needed to run a mission trip independently and, more importantly, successfully. Our hope is that the fruits of our labor contribute to another Chapter of Operation Walk and that they perhaps adopt our 'baby' or find a site they can develop. Then ultimately we can spread the gift of WALK to even more of the world's population.

Allowing a new team to take the reins at running a mission trip in Panama was not easy for any of our coordinators. We had such a close and personal relationship with the medical staff in Panama and did not want to jeopardize that in any way. We spent countless hours preparing for the trip but also trying not to be an overpowering force that would hinder the responsibilities and energy of the Philadelphia team. After months of preparation, all looked good on paper. But the thought loomed in our minds, how would all our efforts play out on game day?

But as we know, babies learn to walk on their own with careful observance and some, but not overwhelming, interference. And once they learn how to take a few steps, they are soon off running.

After the first day in Panama, our anxieties were replaced with pride as the Philadelphia team proved themselves to be a hardworking, organized, compassionate team who exhibited the energy and dedication needed to run their own mission trips.

I have always truly believed that Operation Walk Denver has been blessed. I now know that God is watching over the Philadelphia team as well!

*Congratulations to Dr. Robert Booth Jr. and his coordinators Michelle, Rhoda, Liz, and Sara on the formation of **Operation Walk Philadelphia** and the successful completion of their Inaugural trip to Panama in November 2009!*

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## UN DÍA

by Peggy Kettler, *Operation Walk Denver Logistics Coordinator*

I feel entitled to so many things. I find myself, on a daily basis, expecting great service, smooth roads, flawless wireless capabilities, fresh produce and prompt attention to my needs. I stand in the check-out line at the grocery store counting items in the baskets of other shoppers, hoping to get through the fastest line.

When I visit the dentist, I wonder why a person that arrived later than I did is taken back into the office before me. When it comes to medical care, I expect the best. After all, I have medical insurance coverage and am entitled to my full portion of life. I am a tax paying American citizen. However, nothing curbs my teeming feeling of entitlement like a medical mission trip to a developing country.



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This spring, I encountered a gentleman by the name of Marcial Candanedo in Panama City, Panama. Marcial, because he had done well a year earlier when he had his right knee replaced, was one of the lucky ones selected through the screening clinic as a candidate for left total knee replacement. On Saturday, April 25, 2009, the second day of our April trip, he underwent the surgery.

Although Santo Tomas Hospital is large, we only have an allotment of forty-nine beds, one of the limiting factors to how many surgeries we can perform on a mission trip. Marcial, knowing that the limited number of spaces available in the hospital would impact the number of surgeries performed, made up his mind to work hard at his exercise program and rehabilitation so he could go home ahead of schedule. To the surprise of us all, Marcial was up walking the evening following his surgery, showing us his understanding of the total knee exercises, even standing on one leg to prove his sense of balance.

On Sunday morning, following medical clearance by our medical team and another session with our physical therapists, Marcial prepared to go home. We explained that he was entitled to stay another day or two, the same length of stay for our patients in the U.S. With tears in his eyes, he asked, "If I go home, will you be able to perform surgery on someone else?" We understood then that his primary motivation was to clear his bed so that the gift of walking could be shared with one of his fellow countrymen. With smiles and cheers, he walked down the hall of people waiting for their opportunity and, holding up one finger, said "Un Día, Un Día!" One day, One day!

It is truly incredible witnessing the sacrifices people like Marcial are willing to make for others. He was entitled to another day in the hospital, but he surrendered his spot once he was cleared in hopes that someone else might get a chance. As I said, nothing makes my sense of entitlement fade like an Operation Walk mission trip.



## 'Tis the Season

As we at Operation Walk Denver look back on 2009, we celebrate what we accomplished through the generous support of our donors and corporate partners:

- We traveled to Panama twice – once in the spring and again in the fall – and we completed more than 140 total joint replacements!
- We concluded training a team from Philadelphia who will now embark on their own Operation Walk trips, performing life-changing orthopedic surgeries for those in need.
- At our annual fall event, Walk of Dreams, we raised enough money to go on one of our two annual trips and are already preparing for the fifth annual gala in 2010!
- We received significant contributions toward our endowment, getting closer to our goal of \$4.2M so we can continue our important work in perpetuity.
- We inspired other orthopedic surgeons to inquire about starting their own chapter of Operation Walk.

We look forward to 2010 with a new destination, Guatemala,



where we will begin cultivating a partnership to help people, who may not otherwise have the chance, walk again.

In the spirit of the season, we invite you to consider a gift to Operation Walk Denver. If you aren't sure what to put on your Christmas list or you simply don't need anything this year, please ask friends and family to make a donation to Operation Walk Denver in your name, in lieu of a gift. If you are looking for a secure and smart way to "invest" in something important, please consider a gift or pledge to our endowment or call us to discuss a planned gift.

To make a gift online, go to [www.opwalkdenver.org](http://www.opwalkdenver.org); to make a gift by credit card over the phone, call us at 303-715-7600; mail a check – make it payable to: Operation Walk Denver and send to: 7995 E. Prentice Ave., Ste. 204, Greenwood Village, CO 80111. Every gift counts! Thank you for supporting us. We truly couldn't do it without your generous donations!

On behalf of everyone at Operation Walk Denver, we wish you a safe, healthy and happy holiday season!

*For more information about Operation Walk Denver, please contact the Foundation at 303-715-7617 or visit our website at [www.opwalkdenver.org](http://www.opwalkdenver.org).*

**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 the Foundation at 303-715-7600 or visit our website at [www.opwalkdenver.org](http://www.opwalkdenver.org).

**Thank you for your support!**

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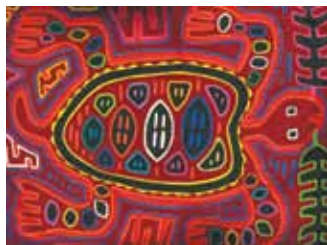
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