



# House of Friendship Orphanage Newsletter

Fall 2006

## Leaders of Knights of Malta travel to San Pedro Sur, Honduras



This past May select members of the Board of the House of Friendship – traveled to Honduras to see first hand the condition of our children and our residences. Bob Fredericks, K.M. Ob.; Peter Muratore, K.M.; Bob Tanzola, K.M.; Karen Tanzola, D.M.; and Patricia King, D.M. made the trip. There they met with Sister Teresita Gonzales of the School Sisters of Notre Dame from St. Louis. They found an oasis of love and care in the middle of indescribable poverty. The children are happy, clean and well-nourished, both physically and spiritually, in a Catholic environment. The House of Friendship is a Project of the New Jersey Area.

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## The Tale of Two Doctors A Story of Dedication and Decision

For fifteen years Dr. Michael Cahill and Deidre Day have been spending their Easter vacations in the mountains of Honduras. At first glance it would be hard to see what this 69 years old experienced pediatrician with a curmudgeon reputation has in common with the thin, red headed, eye twinkling 30 year old that would attract each of them to spend their annual vacation budgets to do exactly the same thing. The only answer is a dedication to their healing profession and a love affair with the gentle people

who call the impoverished villages of Northern Honduras home.

Dr. Cahill, a Bronx born Irishman and father of six children was educated in New York City but has made the children of the Jersey Shore his world. He has practiced in Spring Lake, New Jersey. He is a no nonsense doctor who is short on bedside manner and large on the basics and who doesn't know how to relax. When Henry King, the father of 17 children most of whom Dr. Cahill cared for, lured

the pediatrician to join him on a medical brigade in 1991 in the country where King's 16 and 17<sup>th</sup> children were born, Cahill couldn't resist. Vacations weren't a part of Cahill's world, and the chance to practice his craft in a place as far away from the well manicured, ocean front homes of Spring Lake appealed to him. A daily communicant, Cahill found the work in Honduras compelling, the need enormous and the gratification enough to lure him back at his own expense every year since. This spring, Cahill was there in



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Dr. Cahill examines a child

honor of his friend Henry King for whom the 2006 brigade was named after King's death in April 2005.

Cahill is a bit more hunched than in the early 1990s but no less demanding of his sister who travels with him each year and of the students who work side by side with him as he examines babies and toddlers for six hours each day in unrelenting heat. Cahill, wearing a baseball hat and scrubs has only a bit of Spanish in his repertoire, enough to say *Proxima! Next! Next!*



Pediatricians Drs. Cahill, Day and Neil Kolsky

Cahill's style of pediatrics is to listen to heartbeats, to check ears and throats and to move on. He offers every child the chance to have something serious detected, the opportunity to receive vitamins and parasite medicine, but he is less interested in the exotic disease that would need extra care – for those children he asks that they be taken to a hospital. In the years of doing this primitive clinic work, Cahill has found a way to involve the kids and observe the most important problem he can detect and treat – the respiratory ailments. Armed with scores of pinwheels, Cahill offers every scared little kid a blow on the pinwheel as he discovers the strength of their lungs. Smiles radiate across the patients' faces and laughter erupts among their siblings as the pinwheel entertains them all and gives Cahill the information he needs. One look at the face of worried mothers during their moments with Cahill indicates the pediatrician has discovered a modern methodology for this on-the-road practice of medicine – mothers' worries melt knowing

someone is giving their children the care they have walked miles to get.

Asking why this is the only vacation Cahill takes in a year is a question that just doesn't seem to fit. Cahill's prescription for a full life doesn't seem to involve time off; its main ingredient involves dedication.

Deidre Day was 15 and a neighbor of Henry and Pat King's when the question posed to Cahill was also posed to her. Would you like to spend Easter Vacation in Honduras? Day babysat for the Kings two boys, Andrew and Tim who were born in Honduras, and a Jersey Shore girl with a dream for travel, it was a question she couldn't resist. That Easter trip changed her life – or at least put her on a path that would shape it.

Deidre was studying Spanish so traveling with the doctors and nurses offered her a chance to practice the language and to see the culture of this small Central American country. But it had the unexpected consequence of exposing Deidre to the work of medicine and with each spring's trip, the teenager's love of travel and adventure developed into a desire to become a doctor. She went to the University of Scranton, a Jesuit liberal arts school, and never lost the desire for practicing medicine. Even the enormous cost of medical education did not deter her; she found a way through government support and loans to finance the years of medical school and postgraduate training. This year she came with her residency just about complete – and her pediatric skills

at a high level. At hospital in Wilmington Delaware where she completed her pediatric residency, the cases are complicated and the practice very high tech.

But Deidre knew the brand of medicine she would practice for two weeks would take warmth, care and a few tricks. In her suitcase were dozens and dozens of stickers – sure fired win over the children. Like, Cahill, Deidre listened to chests and checked eyes, ears and throats – but she was also searching for the exotic, anxious to know about some of the complicated medical cases that persist in the mountains. She documented with her camera the children's smiles and as well some of the botched breaks and odd situations brought to her blue-checked cotton clothed bench that served as her examine table.

Deidre has been coming to these villages on and off for 15 years. She began as a teenager who was moved, and has become a physician that personifies dedication. Her long term boyfriend surprised her with an engagement ring just before she traveled to Honduras and other than a Spring 2007 wedding her future is still uncharted. She understands the demands of a practice and the promise of a new family may make yearly treks to Honduras undoable. But for Deidre, Honduras shaped the woman she has become, helped create the doctor she will be, and it is a place to which she knows she will return.



Dr. Day works with a child



## Doctors and Nurses

In the complexity and pressures of today's modern medicine it is sometimes hard to remember the call to service that led many men and women to choose medicine as their profession. The blizzard of insurance paperwork, the maze of tests, medicines and treatments that accompany most encounters with doctors and nurses camouflage the unalloyed dedication that animates the lives of most who choose medicine as a profession.

For 15 years doctors, dentists,

pharmacists, emergency medical technicians and nurses have traveled to Honduras each Easter, at their own expense, to work with Sister Teresita, who organizes medical clinics in the hard to reach villages in the mountains of Honduras for children and families who rarely receive medical care. This year, the medical brigade was named after Henry King, a Knight of Malta who died in April 2005 and who helped Sister Teresita in the early 1990s with her orphan-

ages. King and his wife Patricia helped create this annual medical mission which Patricia now manages. The doctors and nurses came from throughout the East Coast, many year after year. They work long hours, with few modern conveniences, but with deep appreciation for the dignity of the Hondurans who can benefit from their profession. These 25 medical professionals stand as a testament to the dedication of a profession that takes an oath to serve.



Dr Carol Stanton and her son Michael at dentist chair.

## A Granddaughter's Journey ~ *By Mia King*

Deciding to go to Honduras was one of the best decisions I've made. I wanted to go in my granddaddy's honor so that's just what I did. Instead of going on a spring break trip like most teens, I did something useful with my life. I was nervous before I got on the plane to Honduras but once I stepped outside the airport my nerves settled. I didn't know what to expect when we got on the bus and took a two hour drive to the hotel. We went through a city-like part of Honduras, then some mountains, until we finally got to the hotel. I met some new people, and the girls I would be rooming with. There were 5 of us in a big room that I think was like a storage room or where there was a little store. The five of us; Bianca, Monica, Lizzie, Megan, and I were looking at the room and we saw the bathroom. Not what we expected; a toilet, and a hole in

the wall that was our shower. Every morning we woke up at six to eat breakfast and packed up the bus with dozens of medical supplies. Heading up to the top of the mountain to the first village was an adventure. We thought we were going to fall off the side of the cliff, but of course it never would happen because we had a great bus driver, Jose. Once we got off the very old yellow school bus and unpacked all the medical supplies into the buildings we were going to be working at for 3 days, I helped set up my first medical station which was dentistry. At first I thought dentistry was going to be a little too hard for me because I really don't like blood, but I tried it the first day and loved it!

While we were in Honduras I worked at dentistry and Pharmacy. I loved them both, in dentistry I helped hold the flashlight so that the dentist

Carol Stanton could see where she was working, and sometimes I held the patients head so they didn't move around too much, or hurt their neck from leaning back the whole time. In Pharmacy I helped put prescriptions together and helped hand out vitamins and parasite medicine because that was the only thing I could translate to Spanish.

At the second village we went to I worked at Pharmacy and Pediatrics. I worked with Deidre who is a Pediatrician. There were cases that were not that serious like parasites to serious cases like this little boy who we thought had leukemia, and one who was blind. I felt so sad because some of the kids might not be able to get any help at all after we leave, even though we tried to get them into the hospital. While at the Pharmacy Marielena, who is 19 and one of the teens from the orphanage never let babies pass without



Susan King, Marielena and Mia King

her holding them. She loved them all, and I thought it was the cutest thing!

We had one more village left and I couldn't have been more sad. I didn't want to leave; I was having the time of my life. Helping people who are less fortunate, while hanging out with amazing people at the same time. I know that I want to go back next year. Everything that happened in Honduras changed my life, and will always be an important time in my life.

*Mia joined Kathleen and Nicholas Jarmon, Gregory Droggitis grandchildren of Henry B. King and his 17th child Tim King on the trip.*



## Letter from Sister Teresita

Our work in Honduras is all about children. But the work we do at the orphanages, at the schools and during the medical brigade in the mountains each Spring would not be possible without the support of so many friends in the United States. I hope that everyone reading this letter realizes that it is because of you that we are able to make it possible for children to have a better home and a better life. I know that God is very pleased with this link between Friendship House and the Knights of Malta because it is this connection that has made opportunities for the very needy ones whose sufferings are reduced because of all that



Sister Teresita

is happening through that link.

There are also many stories of great success that this relationship is making come true. This year four of our girls are graduating from sixth grade.

Their names are Regina, Rosario, Ana Maria and Laura. Three of the little ones are finishing kindergarten and next year will begin their educational journey in elementary school. Also, we have two older girls who are graduating as bilingual secretaries and are both wonderful role models and powerful stories of success. We want to congratulate both Suyapa and Marielena, whose story is featured in this newsletter.

We thank all the people that made it possible for the children to have a better home and a better life. I am sure God is very pleased with the actions you have done for the very needy ones. You are reducing their sufferings.

On July 30th we had our annual "Caminata". We had success. Thanks to all of you, Knights of Malta, we continue our work.

There is much work and as

well much laughter in our work. As you can see everyone had a wonderful time and I wanted to thank our volunteers Ana Luisa, Justin and Jessica that give their talents and bring out the talents of the children. They bring painting, games and fun trips come alive for our children and as you all know, laughter and songs are very important ingredients in making young children healthy and happy adults.



## The Girl from the Orphanage: *Marielena*

Marielena loves babies. She can't resist hugging them, taking them from their mother's arms, bouncing them on her hip, and turning their tears into laughter. There isn't a baby that passes that Marielena doesn't squeeze, pinch, or hug. But along with exclaiming to all her fellow teenagers in the medical brigade how much she loves babies, Marielena is quick to admit she knows she is too young to become a mother and that she has plans.

Marielena calls Sister Teresita her mother. Her birth mother asked Sister Teresita to care for her daughter when Marielena was about four years old. Recently, Marielena learned that her mother died during the past year and she admits sadness in not being reunited with her, but in conversations she won't dwell on the loss. She is anxious to move forward and to grow in the way Teresita imagines for her.

The girls in Sister Teresita's Friendship House Orphanage didn't have much promise written for them in their book of expectations. Born to poverty, in a country with limited options, Teresita offers these young girls warmth, safety and hope. But there is also something else she offers to those young women like Marielena searching for possibility and a future. Teresita offers herself as a role model.

Teresita's father died when she was young and her widowed mother and extended family expected Teresita to go to work to help support the family. But at a certain point Teresita took a stand and insisted she wanted an education. It was the important next step for herself and her family. In refusing to stay at home fulfilling the immediate needs of her family, Teresita built a future that allows her to serve a larger family. She remains close to her

siblings and is proud of her nephew and niece—the doctors in training—who joined the medical brigade this year. But Teresita's service reaches out to her extended family and to the children of her country to which she is devoted.

Teresita asks much of her protégés—to believe in themselves, to work for their future, and to serve their nation. Marielena has taken up that challenge. After completing her studies at the orphanage she won a scholarship to the secretarial school run by the sisters in Teresita's order. She is learning shorthand and computers and will someday have a chance to work in an office.



Marielena and a child