On Saturday, July 17, 2021, the Angels of Mercy Orientation Area at World Medical Relief was named for Dr. Ernestina “Ernie” de los Santos-Mac. This space, which provides an overview of our organization, its mission, and the building that houses the vital work of World Medical Relief, is often the first real-life contact point for our volunteers, our “Angels of Mercy.” It’s fitting that this area bears Dr. Mac’s name, so committed is she to helping others. Whether through her 50-year medical career, her generous financial donations, or her hands-on work in her home county, The Philippines, giving of herself has always come naturally to Dr. Mac. This generosity is what makes Dr. Mac a true “Angel of Mercy.”

Surrounded by family, friends, and colleagues, the naming ceremony featured several speakers, all of whom recounted stories of Dr. Mac’s focus on giving care and providing assistance to those in need. President of Grosse Pointe and Troy Acute Care Campuses of Beaumont Health Dr. James Lynch, a former colleague of Dr. Mac’s, spoke of her 20+ year career with the health system. Becky Tungol, President of the Philippine American Cultural Center of Michigan (PACCM), embraced her role as Dr. Mac’s “BFF” (Best Friend Forever), with emphasis on the retired pediatrician’s “sincerity, loyalty and love for our Filipino community and others through her constant selfless sacrifice to help the needy, poor and sick here and in other countries abroad.” Tungol noted that she would erect a statute in Dr. Mac’s honor as a symbol of all her friend has done for those less fortunate, ending her remarks by saying, “Because of you the world is a better place to live!” Dr. Robert Barretto and Dr. Efren Platon shared similar sentiments, weaving warm humor into their remarks of praise and admiration.

Before revealing the engraved plaque which bears Dr. Mac’s name, World Medical Relief President & CEO, Frank Julian, welcomed everyone and thanked all who were present for their support and dedication to World Medical Relief’s mission.

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With your unwavering support, we are slowly emerging out of the Covid-19 constrictions and getting our operations back to normal. World Medical Relief’s international team has been agile on its feet, dealing with some unexpected circumstances. We’ve had logistical trials in the past but never experienced delays due to a shortage of container truck drivers - that was something new!

Despite all the challenges, I can say with a grateful heart that with the help of our faithful volunteers and the donations from many hospitals, the international shipments are on target and delivering medical goods to areas in the world that are in dire need of our support.

We just shipped containers to Yemen and Nigeria and are currently preparing containers for Mali and Senegal which will send life-saving personal protective equipment (PPE) to help curb the spread of the Covid-19 virus in those countries.

World Medical Relief’s role in the redistribution of excess PPE from Metro Detroit to countries in the developing world - now in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis - shows how valid our mission “to facilitate the distribution of surplus medical resources where they are needed” still is.

Kasey Walsh has joined World Medical Relief, Inc. as its Local Programs Manager.

She entered our agency at an exciting time. A recent capstone project by University of Detroit Mercy Master’s degree students concluded, “that the World Medical Relief Affordable Prescription Program is an exceptionally unique program that provides a critical service to the uninsured and to those most in need of insulin”.

The students are not alone in this assessment as United Way for Southeastern Michigan recently announced a grant of $70,000 for insulin and a few other very expensive medications, making it possible for the Affordable Prescription Program to help low-income clients with these prescription drugs.

More good news came from Charity Navigator as it awarded World Medical Relief a fifth consecutive 4-star rating. It verifies that World Medical Relief exceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in our area of work.

Please remember to support our operations and programs; your financial contributions are crucial. A special wish this year is to improve our recycling ratio with the purchase of a cardboard compactor. Having such a machine will save on waste hauling costs and floor space. If you would like to help with this project, you can designate your donation to the purchase of a compactor.

Stay safe - stay well! Looking forward to meeting you virtually at our gala’s fireside chat!

Kasey Walsh – Photo: Chene Koppitz

With the continued uncertainty around the Covid-19 virus, it was decided to host the Annual Gala again in a virtual way. Please mark your calendar for this remarkable event which will take place on Saturday, December 4, 2021.

Kasey Walsh – Photo: Chene Koppitz
On June 4, 2021, a container full of medical supplies left for Taiz, Yemen. With the help of World Medical Relief, Humanitarian Aid and Medical Relief for Yemen (HAMRY) was able to send its first ever shipment to the West Asian country, located at the southern end of the Arab peninsula. Cofounders Hdeal Alhadi and Hashim Alhaddi established HAMRY in March 2021, having conceived the idea during the global COVID pandemic.

Project_Taiz 1.0, as the HAMRY founders came to call their efforts, chose that city for delivery because it is both the Taiz Governorate and a war zone. Once the container arrives, the supplies will be shared among the hospitals in the area. Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the world, with nearly 80% of its population living in poverty, according to The World Bank. “The medical supplies have always been scarce. For instance, needles. There’s a lot of reusing needles because they can’t find them with any sort of regularity,” Hdeal said.

This lack of medical supplies is, sadly, part of an ongoing cycle of crisis in Yemen. For the past two decades, political unrest, armed conflicts, suicide bombings, and clashes between civilians and police have become commonplace. Famine, which gripped the area roughly five years ago, was considered the cause of death of more than 50,000 Yemeni children in 2017. The on-going food shortage was compounded by a cholera outbreak, and further exacerbated by the global pandemic of 2020, impacting more than one million Yemeni citizens. International news outlet Al Jazeera has reported that nearly 130,000 Yemenis have died from causes related to lack of food, limited medical supplies, and hardships caused by war and poor economic conditions across the country.

It is because Taiz is an active war zone, one with an ever-volatile frontline, that HAMRY chose to send its inaugural shipment to the city once considered the cultural epicenter of Yemen. Unfortunately, as The Guardian reported last year, Taiz is no longer notable for its culture; instead, it has a new name: the city of snipers. What is fortunate is the humanitarian intervention of groups like HAMRY and organizations such as World Medical Relief, which has previously shipped medical supplies to the country as a whole. Since 2019, World Medical Relief has shipped a collective $14,302,460 worth of medical supplies, weighing in at over 350,891 pounds to the devastated region.

Hdeal and Hashim have been doing what they can to help others before joining together to create HAMRY. Before HAMRY, Hdeal had volunteered at World Medical Relief, having heard about the international humanitarian organization through a friend. She mainly sorted donated medical supplies, placing them in boxes for their final destinations, so she knew well the impact her work and that of other volunteers could have on those who received what the shipments contained. Because of her positive experiences, World Medical Relief was a natural choice to be one of HAMRY’s first partners. As she noted, “We really like what World Medical Relief is about, and we thought, This is the perfect organization for what we want to do and it really has been.”
The first time someone mentioned the country, which historians and archaeologists believe to have been the center of the Maya civilization, David “Pastor Dave” Lomasney politely smiled and continued whatever task he was performing. His trajectory didn’t allow him to deviate from his current mission work. However, the region, as well as his need to visit, would soon reemerge.

As a man whose life has had its share of divine intervention, he was aware of how often the country was coming to his attention. It wasn’t an out-of-the-blue suggestion. As both a volunteer and a pastor, he had been on missions in countries like Brazil, which had similar humanitarian aid challenges. He certainly had the skill set.

But when his friend and fellow missionary, Pastor Carlos, told him, “You and I need to do a project in Guatemala,” he knew he was bound for the Pacific Ocean-bordered country.

Why would anyone, including Pastor Dave, need to visit Guatemala? Although its capital, Nueva Guatemala de las Asunción, is the largest city in Central America, Guatemala is less well-known than its bordering countries: Mexico to the north, Belize to the east, and Honduras and El Salvador to the south. The answer lies in the country’s troubled modern history, which includes decades-long civil war, natural disasters, and high rates of poverty. The suffering caused by issues such as these are central to the World Medical Relief mission: to facilitate the distribution of surplus medical supplies where they are needed, anywhere in the world.

As Pastor Dave, who is the current World Medical Relief Ambassador of Health to Guatemala, noted, the country is currently ranked 31st of the 33 Latin American and Caribbean counties on the United Nations’ Human Development Index (HDI), a statistical indicator of factors such as life expectancy, education, and per capita income. For context, Norway has been in one of the top spots of the entire HDI for decades, whereas the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom regularly place in teens or 20s.

Quality of life issues are at the heart of the work Pastor Dave performed in Guatemala. “Throughout the whole of the Americas, Guatemala has the worst malnutrition rate. 50% of the population under the age of five is malnourished,” he said. Food insecurity is just one of several health-related crises facing the Guatemalan people. Lack of access to both medical facilities, as well as supplies and medication, mean that those with serious health problems cannot get the help they need.

Working with a team of 10 (four Americans and six Guatemalans), with sponsorship from Integrity International, World Medical Relief donations were combined with purchased medication and then labeled in Spanish by another volunteer, Vicki Augustiniak. This labeling allowed the recipients to use these prescriptions correctly once the mission group had departed. It was here that Pastor Dave’s training as a pharmacy assistant,
as well as the ability to communicate in Spanish, became blessings.

“Another example of the barrier to medical intervention is the ability to communicate with the various Guatemalan populations. The indigenous population, the Mayan peoples, speak nearly 20 different languages,” he said.

After months of planning, collecting, translating, and getting the necessary paperwork, the team was ready to go, but the COVID-19 pandemic put the mission on hold. Thankfully, as travel restrictions eased, they were able to fulfill the mission in late spring 2021. Working from June 1 through June 12, they visited three cities: Cobán, Sanarte, and Guatemala City.

While on the mission, Pastor Dave was able to improve both the mobility and quality of life for one local woman who had lost her leg to complications of diabetes. He learned of Glendi’s plight through her pastor, Gilder Escobar, who expressed her inability to afford a prosthetic limb. While sorting supplies in the World Medical Relief warehouse, Pastor Dave saw a potential match for Glendi’s missing leg in the orthopedic area. After asking Alex Petrylka, World Medical Relief Manager of International Programs, if the prosthetic was available, Pastor Dave secured it for Glendi. He transported the leg in his luggage to Pastor Gilder, who had assisted the American missionary with other humanitarian projects, such as clean water well drilling, in the past. After her pastor presented her with the leg, Glendi tried it on and it fit. This is a perfect example of what our founder, Irene Auberlin, called “a miracle in the building”: a very specific item, needed by a specific person that seemingly materializes at exactly the right time! Pastor Dave said that Glendi was ecstatic to be blessed in such a special way by someone she will never meet, someone who donated an item they no longer needed to World Medical Relief.

“Part of what draws me to World Medical Relief is its philosophy that things unneeded by one person can be the miracle that someone else is waiting on. That’s something my dad emphasized. Things that have value aren’t thrown away,” said Pastor Dave with a smile. “My dad never threw anything away.”
On a Thursday morning in June, World Medical Relief staff and board members gathered to honor former board member Bruce Carr as he and his wife Carol are moving to live closer to their son Dave in Illinois. A teacher by trade but missionary at heart, Bruce had a big impact on World Medical Relief in many ways.

Bruce Carr was born in Tennessee on December 25, 1938 and grew up in Detroit. He graduated from Anderson University in Indiana, became a social studies teacher in the Detroit Public schools, and earned a Master’s degree in history from Wayne State University.

Upon retirement from his teaching career, Bruce led a group from his church, which is part of American Baptist Churches/USA, to a very impoverished area of the Dominican Republic. That experience, and nine other mission trips back there and to Haiti and Nicaragua, inspired him to start a website – helpingworldwide.org – to catalog approximately 400 humanitarian relief agencies around the country that serve the developing world. His hope was to connect people who have something to donate or an interest to volunteer with an agency they could support. The website also led many missionaries from other countries to Bruce who gladly answered their questions or even hosted them at his house. He would tour metro Detroit and World Medical Relief with them.

Bruce has been a fervent promoter of World Medical Relief for over 25 years. He spoke about the agency at many Rotary Clubs and was always willing to join World Medical Relief’s outreach team when they were out in the community. He would tell anyone who stopped at the agency’s booth about how World Medical Relief was started.

His knowledge about the agency’s history is extensive as he researched its history for years. He was able to locate the house in Detroit where the Auberlins started collecting in-kind donations, and when the book will be published, he will be credited with laying the foundation and compiling the historical archives.

One time his dentist, knowing of Bruce’s interest in World Medical Relief, offered a used dental chair in good condition if Bruce could take it there. It fit in Bruce’s SUV with a half inch to spare. Upon its arrival in Detroit, Dr. George Samson said, “We are finishing a shipment to Kenya and have everything our applicant requested – except for a dental chair. Now the order is complete.”

Years before Project My Heart Your Heart became reality, Bruce was already collecting used pacemakers as he envisioned their reuse. In his younger years, Bruce would also pick up donated wheelchairs and supplies. At one point, World Medical Relief’s warehouse men were shocked to see him pull up in a funeral hearse that he borrowed from a friend as it was roomy enough to transport all the donated items.

He inspired many, including his son Dan who was also a high school teacher. Dan would bring whole bus loads with students from Lansing to volunteer, often joined by parents who worked alongside their children.

He was appointed to the agency’s advisory board on January 26, 2010, and elected to the board in April of 2015, reelected in April, 2018 and served as a director until April, 2021. World Medical Relief will be forever grateful to Bruce for his service.

Bruce, a man of few words, says, “I am simply one person trying to serve God and help humankind.”
Relief President and CEO George Samson recalled the numerous accomplishments and awards of this incredible woman, which include Who’s Who Among Detroit Professional Women; Commissioner, Asian Pacific Affairs Commission; 100 Most Influential Filipino Women in the World; Beaumont Health System Outstanding Physician for Community and Humanitarian Service; Prince of Albay (Philippines) Woman of Substance Award; Corp! Magazine Diversity Award, and the Irene M. Auberlin Award for service above self.

The plaque offers not only the date of the naming ceremony, but offers an insightful and inspirational quote from Dr. Mac, which explains her reasons for supporting World Medical Relief and other causes she helps sustain. “One of the reasons I chose to keep working was to be able to support the community activities near and dear to my heart, World Medical Relief among these. When my husband passed away, volunteering with the organization allowed me to help people as I mourned. World Medical Relief has given me the opportunity to grow and truly learn the needs of the people, not only in my country, the Philippines, but throughout Metro Detroit.”

World Medical Relief congratulates Dr. Ernestina de los Santos-Mac on the naming of the Angels of Mercy Orientation Area in honor and thanks her for tireless years of service to so many people in so many places across the globe. She does indeed make our world a better place to live by being in it. All who encounter her kind spirit and loving heart are touched by this Angel of Mercy here on earth.

If you would like to honor a friend, family member, or colleague by naming a space for them at World Medical Relief, please contact Development Director Josephine Jabara at 313.866.5333. Naming opportunities provide a legacy for you or a loved one and help World Medical Relief fulfill its mission to facilitate the distribution of surplus medical resources where needed locally, nationally, and internationally. A gift today means a life can be saved tomorrow.

Support World Medical Relief while you shop at Kroger

There is an easy way to support World Medical Relief when you shop at Kroger. Go to your account on Kroger’s website and then to the button that says “Community Rewards”. Find World Medical Relief (EQ311) and link the organization to your account.
THE GOOD SAMARITAN

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Aug. 2021: 7, 14, 21, 28
Sept. 2021: 4, 11, 18, 25
Oct. 2021: 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
Nov. 2021: 6, 13, 20
Dec. 2021: 4, 11, 18

2021 GALA
Saturday, December 4, 2021

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