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# NEWSLETTER

Ecuadorian Volunteers Association  
“A helping hand for the needs of Ecuador”

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION

Number 24 — December 2007

Editor: Marco A. Peña

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## From our President

With a great sense of emotion I have heard reports of the success of **Operation Walk Ecuador** from our members, Dr. Juan and Mrs. Graciela Chediak. Their account of this medical mission was that after overcoming innumerable obstacles, the hard work, generosity and commitment of the *Operation Walk* team paid off! Twenty three (23) patients received joint replacements!

Back in February, when I brought the first set of x-rays from possible operation candidates at *Hospital Tierra Nueva* to doctor Victoria Brander, and later in June, when my husband and I hand-carried a new set of x-rays to be studied and selected for surgery, *Operation Walk* sounded like a far away dream. Now, this dream has become a reality!

On behalf of the members, directors and friends of Ecuadorian Volunteers Association, our heartfelt THANK YOU to each of the members of the Orthopedic Surgery Brigade for bringing their knowledge and skillful hands to *Hospital Tierra Nueva*, and to the person conceiving and implementing the idea of bringing *Operation Walk* to Ecuador. We thank the coordinators here in Chicago and the

ones in Quito for their tenacity and persistence. We also extend our gratitude to the people behind the scenes whose names are never mentioned, and yet their efforts and hard work have contributed to the success of this mission.

Thank you all for a job well done!

Sincerely,

**Mariana Barriga, President**  
Ecuadorian Volunteers Association

## Special Reports

### **OPERATION WALK/ECUADOR, A SUCCESSFUL REALITY**

*I agreed to write this article, to honor one very special Ecuadorian expatriate his wife Margot; his niece Betty*

*Weiser; and his sister, Nelly Weiser; as well as 45 extremely special Northwestern medical professionals, 22 grateful Ecuadorian patients with brand new knee implants plus one with a reconstructed leg, and the E.V.A. volunteers who supported the recent **Operation Walk** project.*

*My journey to this article started over two years ago when Betty told me that her uncle, **Ernie Freudman**, had a dream to bring *Operation Walk* to Quito. This project, as you know, replaces badly crippled joints in needy patients who, would have no hope of living out their final decades contributing honorably to their families' lives.*

*At that point, Graciela Chediak was vigilantly working to connect with*



Dr. Nicole Higgins, an anesthesiologist with “Operation Walk”, with grateful patients who received knee implants

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*Hospital Tierra Nueva, since their mobile dental unit was already one of E.V.A.'s projects. However, she needed a local contact to make a personal visit. I had a car, a muddling amount of Spanish, and a tenacity rivaling Atilla the Hun. I set off with the encouragement and support of my husband, George Wygod, a 24-year veteran of staying one step ahead of Ecuadorian challenges. During the following 12 months, George and I had some pleasant and some startlingly distasteful meetings with doctor groups here in Quito to determine which facilities would maximize the contribution Northwestern could make during their short week in the country.*

*In September 2006, three leaders of Operation Walk came to Quito to finalize plans for their November 2007 work. Dr. Victoria Brander, Laci Nabers and Odell Woods had the advantage of Dr. Juan Chediak's coincidental visit. Dr. Che-*

*diak helped chauffeur them from the south of Quito to the north, tour them through each facility, and even whirl them around 'La Mitad del Mundo'.*

*The tremendous planning effort became shockingly concrete when the Northwestern group sent their 120-page list of equipment, medicines and supplies to Graciela Chediak for translation, prior to its submission to the Minister of Health for import approval.*

*At the same time, George, Betty and I were scrambling to find ground transportation to and from the hospital for 50 people a day, arrange group dinners, supervise two blood drives at the American School, et al. Also, at the last moment, the three of us found wonderful medical students from San Francisco University who agreed to translate in and out of the surgical rooms. While each of these tasks seems simple, if not mundane, each had its moment of failure and restart—at least once.*

*Meanwhile, Dr. Patricia Jarrin from*

*Hospital Tierra Nueva, was up to her armpits in bureaucratic confusion at the Ministry of Health that persisted until three days prior to the scheduled arrival of the first wave of doctors from Northwestern on Friday, November 9th. There were moments when no amount of "palanca" seemed to move things an inch. Then, the luckiest "palanca" of all turned up on Dr. Brander's doorstep in Chicago—**Pierina Correa**, the sister of Ecuador's president, who enabled the clearance of all their supplies through Ecuadorean customs. Without Pierina's help, none of us are certain what could have been wrested from the vice grip of red tape and selectively invoked legalities.*

*Iberia Airlines added to the drama with its fateful arrival in Quito the afternoon of November 9th. by blowing two tires on landing, sliding off the runway, and taking critical landing lights with them. The runway was closed to international night landings for the next few days. The advanced Northwestern team detoured to Guayaquil without their baggage which American Airlines had managed to fumble. The second group of 34, arrived in Guayaquil the following night, chartered a plane to Quito the next morning—all with the help of **Pierina Correa**—and finally made it to sierra soil by midday.*

*From Sunday through Friday, the surgeons, anesthesiologists, nurses, OR manager, internists, physical therapists, cargo experts, coordinators, and administrators from Northwestern Orthopedic Institute worked their magic with the patients. Dr. S. David Stulberg and Dr. Victoria Brander must still feel the thanks echoing in their hearts for leading this expedition of selfless gift.*

*The most impressive day for me was Sunday, November 18th, after all the Northwestern personnel had left 'Tierra Nueva'. Ernie, Margot, Betty, George and I went for our last visit to the 23 patients with new legs and*



Dr. S. David Stulberg, Head of "Operation Walk", with patient who received knee implant.

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*new hopes. They paraded a person through the halls for us, to show their new abilities and improved stature, each one beaming smiles that stretched the boundaries of their faces. One gentleman kept walking up and down stairs and through the almost empty corridors, proving he was the champion of the walkers. Their pride was palpable. That's the gift that Ernie dreamed of. The one he got to live... May we all dream!*

*Suzi Leonard*

**Suzi Leonard** is an American expatriate living in Ecuador, whose work has been invaluable in making **Operation Walk/Ecuador** a cherished reality. She has been the person “on the ground” from the very beginning. Her hard work, persistence and dedication culminated in the success of

the medical mission from Northwestern Orthopedics Institute. However, everyone involved in the implementation of this wonderful achievement deserves the highest praise and recognition.

Thank you to all the distinguished professionals from Northwestern Orthopedics Institute. Thank you Ernie Freudman for your vision. Thank you Suzi Leonard.

## Accomplishments

### ROTARY CLUB OF OAK PARK'S GIFT TO ASILO DE ANCIANOS SAN IGNACIO DE LOYOLA

Last May, our Secretary, Mrs. Graciela Chediak, made a presentation of the work of E.V.A. before the

Rotary Club of Oak Park. She highlighted the needs of **Asilo de Ancianos San Ignacio de Loyola**, especially the need for bathroom facilities adjacent to the dormitories (article in September issue of our Newsletter). The Rotary Club sent us a generous donation of \$2,000 which, along with private donations and a generous grant from the Municipality of Quito, will allow the home to start their much needed project. We will continue keeping you informed and hope to have photographs of the finished project in a future Newsletter.

### VISIT TO SENIOR CITIZENS DINING ROOM SAN PEDRO CLAVER

In her recent visit to Ecuador, E.V.A. member Carmen Edith Freeze visited **Fundación San Pedro Claver** in Quito. This is her account.

*Upon my arrival I was greeted by a staff member who gave me a tour of the facility. Soon thereafter, I noticed a young volunteer teaching two elderly women how to read Spanish. He appeared to do so with great pleasure and the ladies were equally enthused, as they were all smiles. I was impressed with many things: the decor, the level of cleanliness, the food service, and, most importantly, the way in which the staff treated the seniors. The meals were of a good quality, prepared in a healthy manner, and above all, tasted GREAT!*

*During my tour I spoke with several of the seniors present, and they conveyed to me how grateful they were for the facility and the excellent quality meals it provided to them. They were very welcoming and active.*

*It is my assessment that the environment provided by the center allows these seniors to thrive both physically and socially, despite their ages and hardships. It is clear that sponsorship of this center is very worthwhile and it does make a difference.*



Juan y Graciela Chediak, members of E.V.A. with “Operation Walk” patient.

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Future Activities

E.V.A.'s FUNDRAISING 2008

Our annual fundraising event will be a dinner-dance scheduled for **Saturday, April 26, 2008**. It will be held at the Village of Morton Grove Memo-

rial Civic Center located at 6140 W. Dempster in Morton Grove, Illinois, 60053. Music, food and drink will be offered, in addition to our Silent Auction and Raffle. Free and ample parking is available for our guests.

**PLEASE SAVE THE DATE!**

*Are you a "Friend of E.V.A.?"*

*If not,  
Ecuadorian Volunteers  
Association  
invites you to become*

**A FRIEND OF E.V.A.**

*Please complete,  
detach and mail to:*

E.V.A.  
**Graciela Chediak**, Secretary  
1506 Lathrop Avenue  
River Forest, IL 60305

*Name*

*Address*

*Telephone*

*E-mail*

*Your annual contribution is  
tax deductible*

*\$25 \_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_*

*Other \_\_\_*



Quito, november 16, 2007

Would like to thank:

*ECUADORIAN VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATION*

*For your participation in the ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY BRIGADE as "Operation Walk", from 11 to 16 of november, 2007. Your presence here has been very important.*

*Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. You belong to the great family of Tierra Nueva. Thanks for sharing the same goals and walking together to accomplish the mission to provide a better life to the poor and needy of Quito.*

*God bless you,*

*Lic. Mercedes Silva*  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FTN

*Dra. Beatriz Rivadeneira*  
HEALTH P. DIRECTOR

*Dra. Patricia Jarrin*  
BRIGADE COORDINATOR



*"Nuestrea vida es un don... la vivimos  
para volverla un servicio a los más necesitados".*

*D. José Carollo*