

OP **Walk** TALK

A PUBLICATION FOR THE FRIENDS OF OPERATION WALK DENVER



SPRING MISSION TO PANAMA

By Douglas A. Dennis, M.D.
*Executive Director,
Operation Walk Denver*

We have recently returned from our spring Operation Walk Denver mission to Panama City, Panama. As with many of our previous missions, this trip went well and was very fulfilling for both myself as well as the many Operation Walk Denver team members who participated.

We performed a total of 75 free hip and knee replacements. Since we have been to Panama a number of times, one would think that the complexity of the cases would start becoming less, since we have done so many difficult cases there. The patients that we operated on this trip, if anything, were more complex than in previous missions, exhibiting profound disability, hip stiffness, and knee deformities.

Many of you will remember in previous correspondence in this newsletter discussion about Maria and Jose. At a young age, both of them were wheelchair-bound and totally disabled due to advanced joint destruction of their hips and knees from untreated juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. Maria and Jose have had both of their hips and knees replaced by Operation Walk Denver. It is exciting that they now work as ambassadors for us in Panama, helping care for new patients.

During our recent trip, we treated another patient with advanced juvenile rheumatoid arthritis who was every bit as disabled as Maria and Jose. A year ago, she was wheelchair-bound and we performed bilateral knee replacement. This got her ambulatory, although with significant pain and the need for a walker due to the severe destruction of both of both hips. Her name is Flavia. Both of her hips were replaced during this recent trip, and Maria and Jose helped with her rehabilitation. It was joyous to see.

Other highlights were educational seminars. One evening we had a city-wide orthopedic seminar to educate local surgeons in the community on how to perform joint replacement. An additional seminar was held by our physical therapy team to educate local physical therapists. One of the goals of Operation Walk Denver is to educate local healthcare providers so they can care for their own people in a better way.

I certainly want to thank the Crocs Corporation. They traveled with us to Panama and donated a new pair of Crocs shoes for every patient. I'll never forget seeing one of my patients receive his new shoes. He was 53 years of age and nearly cried receiving them. It was the first new pair of shoes he had received in his entire lifetime. Thanks so much to Crocs for supporting our mission.

I want to remind everyone of our upcoming Walk of Dreams gala to be held Saturday, September 21, 2013. This year's gala is going to be very special. It is our 10-year anniversary of starting Operation Walk Denver! We have a lot of surprises in mind that should make for an exciting evening. It would mean a great deal to me personally for you to attend, as we hope to have our largest crowd ever for this 10-year celebration.

Lastly, many thanks all of my Operation Walk team members. I continue to be amazed with the intensity of their hard work, dedication, and compassion for those in need. I am so lucky to be associated with them.



Walk
OPERATION WALK DENVER
restoring the joy of walking

Rocky Mountain
Adventist Healthcare Foundation
+ Centura Health.

A CHANGING LIFE

Operation Walk USA

By Cohan Zarnoch

Walking through the hallway, I noticed a gentleman with a severe limp. I was reminded of the difficulties one faces when a hip or knee is severely deteriorated from use, injury or arthritis and the pain one must face with this disability. So many suffer with debilitating health issues because they lack health insurance and are unable to afford the surgery necessary to improve their quality of life. As I was watching this gentleman, I was told he was one of the patients that would be receiving a new hip from Operation Walk USA. After the introductions were made, I noticed the sparkle in his eye and the emotion on his face as he spoke of the new hip he was going to receive and the life changes that were to come for him down the road. The gratitude was evident as he spoke of what he wanted to accomplish for himself as well as his family. He also spoke of the pain, which was a constant reminder for him each day, and the limitations that continued to prevent him from maintaining his independence. "My possibilities for activity are limited. I just can't go do the things I love to do."

Todd Tychewicz, an artist of metals and jewelry, designs and creates jewelry he sells to support himself. Standing for long hours in his shop is what Todd finds so difficult, and he quits earlier each day because his body has given out before his mind is ready to quit. He also misses the simple joys of household chores he hasn't been able to do for a very long time, like chopping wood or shoveling snow.

Surgery day has finally arrived. As I enter Todd's room, I am greeted by family and friends and the smiles that are radiating as each one introduces themselves. Todd shares with me his excitement and gratitude for those helping with his surgery. He says "I believe in miracles and Operation Walk is a miracle in my life." As Todd is wheeled away, smiles and tears accompany him and his nurse Linda, as they make their way toward the operating room along with that twinkle in his eye that I had seen so many times before...

Within twenty four hours of surgery, Todd is up and starting to try out his new hip. As I arrive to the floor, I am greeted by



Todd getting ready to walk down the hallway to meet the other patients and thank the Operation Walk team for changing his life. The first thing I notice is the smile on his face and that sparkle in his eyes along with his amazing gift for life. As we start down the hallway, he shares with me his determination to work through the pain of surgery and assures me it is less pain than the pain he was experiencing everyday just trying to stand and walk. He said he is looking forward to getting back in the game of life and he wants to make a difference in people's lives, to do something nice for someone he will never even know. Watching Todd walk down the hall with excitement and anticipation for his new future is what Operation Walk USA is all about ... *Changing Lives.*

A TALE OF THREE HEARTS

By Jim Boyle, PA

Medical Coordinator, Operation Walk Denver

Let me tell you a story of a special woman that touched our hearts even though she never became a patient of Operation Walk. She never had surgery with us but because our paths crossed, her life and ours were certainly affected.

Leonila is a beautiful 48-year-old lady with a contagious smile that was presented to our clinic for an evaluation of a painful left hip. We found out very quickly she preferred the name Lucy. After careful thought and discussion, we decided to admit her to the hospital for further evaluation and possible hip replacement. However there were some unanswered questions we needed to find answers to. Our screen team suggested an evaluation by our physical therapy team prior to surgery to help us piece together her puzzle. After a thorough evaluation by our team, it became obvious that this was not a straightforward case. Our focus turned toward her right hip instead of her left.

More investigative work unveiled a history of ovarian cancer and unclear treatment path. When we interrogated the patient about her cancer history, she assured us that she was treated appropriately and has been told she was cancer-free. We pressed forward and ordered more imaging studies which confirmed our suspicions. Not only has the cancer returned, but it enveloped her entire pelvis, bladder and most of her spine.

Our hearts wept.

Along with our Panamanian Operation Walk coordinator, Dr. Karla Morales, we tried delicately to inform Lucy of her diagnosis. The next few days Lucy went through denial, anger and sadness. Her son Michael never left her side. Although

we would not be operating on Lucy, it was apparent that we adopted her as a family member. Our nurses continued to show her compassion and comfort in hopes to keep her spirits high. Our doctors would visit her with reassuring smiles. Other team members prayed, cried and laughed with Lucy. We tried our best to uplift her as she fought this battle physically, mentally and emotionally.

There is a verse in the bible that says "A cherished heart brings good medicine." I witnessed this first hand. Although Lucy's prognosis was not good, she was able to share such quality time with her son Michael. She became part of our family and the other patients cared for her too. I believe it was God's plan to have our paths cross. Through His grace, Lucy became aware and eventually accepted her fragile state.

What's more important to you? Quantity or quality of time? I think if I asked Lucy, she would answer "quality."

Lucy's, Operation Walk's and God's heart came together in a patient's ward in Panama this past trip. We don't know what God has planned for Lucy's future. We do know she touched the hearts of so many people that met her or even heard her story. Laughter, sorrow and compassion filled Lucy's room, but also a sense of calm as our team knew Lucy was going to be taken care of. So as we pray for our patients on our trip, we also pray for those that God puts in our path. Because, Lucy never was supposed to be our patient. But He had other plans.



Celebrating 10 years of making the joy of walking a reality

Walk of Dreams

2013 GALA

Saturday, September 21

HYATT REGENCY DENVER CONVENTION CENTER

650 15th Street, Denver, Colorado

FOR INFORMATION ON REGISTRATION AND SPONSORSHIPS

please call 303-715-7600 or visit www.operationwalkdenver.org




TO BENEFIT:

WALK
OPERATION WALK DENVER
restoring the joy of walking

SPONSORED BY:

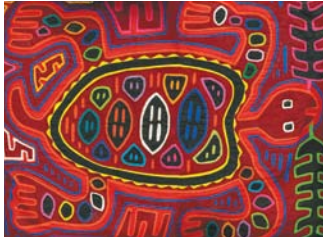
Rocky Mountain
Adventist Healthcare Foundation

 Centura Health.

Supporting Adventist Healthcare in the Rocky Mountain Region

MEDIA SPONSOR:

coloradobiz



OPERATION WALK DENVER DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Barb A. Allen, MD
Michelle Brokaw
Tom Curran
Douglas A. Dennis, MD
Mike Durbin
Steve Etkind
Brian Haas, MD
Randy Haffner
Karen Johnson
Guy and Nicola Lansdown
Derick Levy, PT
Tim McTavish
Todd M. Miner, MD, Chair
Aileen Paez, PT

EMERITUS:
Rosie Fedorowicz
Mark F. Leonard
R. Jerry Overgaard

Operation Walk Denver is a nonprofit 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.

Thank you for your support!



www.facebook.com/opwalkdenver

Special thanks to Mark and Nancy Leonard

Operation Walk Denver's annual appeal letter reached an all-time high in fundraising due to a generous matching gift from Mark and Nancy Leonard. The annual appeal letter has raised \$49,870, including a fully-matched \$10,000 gift from Mark and Nancy Leonard, long-time supporters and volunteers of Operation Walk Denver.



All funds raised through this initiative are used to pay for life-changing hip and knee joint replacement surgeries for many deserving people in Panama and Guatemala in 2013. Please consider the impact your gift will make to improve quality of life for people with very few resources and in desperate need of surgery. It's not too late to make a difference in someone's life. Your gift could mean a miracle.



**WITH APPRECIATION TO
SOME OF OUR SPONSORS:**

Crocs Cares

Crazy Scrubs

**Johnson Moving &
Storage**