



restoring joy

A NEWSLETTER OF OPERATION WALK DENVER

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“Operation Walk Denver means love”

Alfonso was in desperate need of surgery when OpWalk visited Panama last year, but he wasn't healthy enough for the operation.

New plans were made to help Alfonso, which led to a whirlwind journey spanning 6,000 miles – made possible by you, our supporter.

Most people don't dream of rowdy games of pick-up basketball by the time they reach their 80th birthday.

But Alfonso Sanchez Rangel is not like most people. At 78, he couldn't wait to get back on the court. It's a dream he's held on to for decades, ever since he developed debilitating arthritis in his knee.

And it's a dream that eventually took him 6,000 miles from his home in Panama – all the way to Denver.



Alfonso and his daughter, Jianina.

The Operation Walk Denver team met Alfonso during their annual trip to Panama last year. They wanted to operate on him, but he

was recovering from an injury. The risk of surgical complications was too high.

Then one team member came up with a radical idea: what if they brought him to Colorado for an operation?

Alfonso had never left Panama and he was excited about going on the trip of a lifetime to fix his bad knee.

Teams here in Colorado and in Panama worked together to make it happen. Alfonso and his daughter – who accompanied him to help with rehabilitation – needed passports and visas. Once those were secured, flights, travel, and room and board were coordinated. Logistics for the surgery came next, and then a schedule of events for the days Alfonso would be in Denver.

Finally, in early March, Alfonso and his daughter, Jianina, arrived in Denver on a cold winter evening. They were greeted by Operation Walk Denver team members, who quickly bundled

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WALK
OPERATION WALK DENVER
restoring the joy of walking

Alfredo's generosity leads to great change

One man's passion for helping his neighbors makes a big difference in the lives of many Panamanians.

A message from Operation Walk Denver's Chief Development Officer, Laura Fitch, who has worked alongside Alfredo for years.

I met Alfredo Maduro several years ago when I began fundraising for Operation Walk Denver.

By then Alfredo had been working with the founder of Operation Walk, Dr. Larry Dorr, for many years. In fact, their partnership goes all the way back to 1999!

At that time, Dr. Dorr was looking for a country to host his team so that he could begin providing free surgeries for those burdened with severe arthritic joints. Alfredo – a well-connected businessman and philanthropist – happened to have a friend who was a patient of Dr. Dorr's and had told him about Operation Walk. Alfredo knew right away that he had to help.

The two made a dynamite duo and together paved the way for Operation Walk to start serving so many deserving Panamanians. While Dr. Dorr was working on logistics stateside, Alfredo was connecting with Panama's Ministry of Health and

the First Lady, Yanina Fernandez de Torrijos, about supporting the mission. After receiving approval from the government, Alfredo helped select Hospital Santo Tomas, a new hospital in Panama City, as the home for Operation Walk.

In the years that followed, Alfredo would continue his partnership with Dr. Dorr and also expand his reach to assist satellite programs, including Operation Walk Denver.

Last year we celebrated Operation Walk Denver's 15th trip to Panama. Since the beginning, Alfredo has served as the team's local connection and ally. He's a huge help to us before trips by holding our medical cargo shipments at his corporate warehouse. This ensures that our cargo will be protected until the team arrives for surgery. His company, Canal Movers, then helps to transport the medical supplies to the hospital.

Additionally, his nonprofit foundation, Fundayuda, works with local media agencies, newspapers, and radio stations to notify the community of Operation Walk's arrival. Due to the publicity, many hoping for corrective surgery will travel to Hospital Santo Tomas, which enables our teams to assist as many as possible while we're in Panama.

Alfredo and his team also help during the mission week by providing transportation, lunches and snacks for the team, and coordinating many of the local logistics.

Altogether, I can't even begin to place a number on the amount of in-kind and monetary donations he has generously given to Operation Walk Denver over the years.

When asked why he continues to serve Operation Walk he simply stated, "My people need these surgeries and it's my way of helping make a difference."

Generosity truly does heal!



Alfredo and Operation Walk Denver's Chief Development Officer, Laura Fitch, in Panama. Alfredo is an avid supporter and friend of OpWalk.

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them into donated coats, hats, and scarves (the two of them had rarely experienced temperatures below 80 degrees).

After a full day of standard tests to ensure he was healthy enough for surgery, Dr. Dennis performed the knee replacement operation.

Prior to the surgery, Alfonso wasn't able to remember a time when he could walk comfortably.

"The pain was so bad – everything would hurt," Alfonso said. "The first operation helped [he had surgery on his other knee a few years before], but I'm hoping this one will make me feel even better."

Even though he was dealing with incredible pain, Alfonso kept a positive attitude, which only helped amplify his bright personality. At barely five feet tall, he joked with hospital staff that he would one day play basketball as well as his long-time idol – American pro basketball player Jo Jo White (who was 6'3").

So, it came as no surprise that Alfonso was back on his feet as soon as possible after the operation. He dedicated himself to his rehabilitation so that he could return to Panama whole and healthy.

When Alfonso was asked what Operation Walk Denver meant to him, he knew right away:

"It means many things. It means good health, it means life... it means so much more. It's a gift that



Looking good! Physical therapist Kristin Schank and Dr. Douglas Dennis help Alfonso get back on his feet after surgery.

helps you walk again. It gives you freedom to work, play, and have a life once more."

"That's what Operation Walk Denver means: it's a program with heart."

Alfonso's journey was completely donor-funded, which means that you made this incredible trip possible.

Thank you for supporting people like Alfonso and for providing a new life and hope to those who have gone decades without the simple joy of walking on their own.

Honduras by the numbers

Our recent mission trip led to incredible results:

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, the latest mission team of 62 volunteers accomplished the following during one supercharged week in Honduras:

- 74 patients screened
- 62 joints replaced over three days of surgery
- Many other surgical candidates placed on the waiting list for the next trip

Because of you, our fourth trip to Honduras was a success! We can't wait to return in fall 2019 to provide for many more patients seeking care.



Former OpWalk patient, Johanna (left), works with physical therapist Aileen Paez (middle) to assist patients recovering from their operations.

Erasing pain and restoring joy

Mercedes Hernandez was in excruciating pain – his bad knee made every step a nightmare.

When his local doctor told him about an opportunity to fix his knee through Operation Walk Denver, Mercedes knew he'd do anything to be a part of it.

At 77 years old, Mercedes Hernandez wasn't sure he'd ever be able to leave his house again.

He had developed severe arthritis in his right knee. The pain was excruciating – every step burned. Since it was nearly impossible for Mercedes to put any weight on his knee, he rarely left his home.

In addition to the isolation he felt, he was heartbroken by the fact that he couldn't be a part of his children and grandchildren's lives.

Then his doctor referred him to a hospital in San Pedro Sula and told him that a team from America would be coming to perform free joint replacement surgeries.

Mercedes lives in a small, rural community about 90 minutes from San Pedro Sula, but he knew he couldn't miss this opportunity.

In Honduras, nearly 60 percent of the population lives in poverty. In rural communities, like the town where Mercedes lives, that number climbs even higher. As a result, many can't afford to pay for medical care. Simple issues are ignored – until the pain makes them impossible to forget.

On the day of Operation Walk Denver's open consultations, Mercedes was just one of many who lined the hospital walls hoping to receive help for problems that had impacted their entire lives.

Our doctors knew right away that Mercedes was a great candidate. His knee was severely arthritic and he was healthy enough for the

operation. He was profoundly happy to be one of 62 people chosen for the surgery.

Mercedes made sure he put that joy to good use: the day after his surgery he was up and moving, determined to enjoy every minute of his new, mobile life.

He told our team that he's so grateful to be independent once more. He also can't wait to return home and play with his grandchildren for the first time in years.

Our donors give people like Mercedes so many wonderful gifts – joy, mobility, and independence, to name a few.

It's transformative to be a part of making someone's dreams come true. And that's what you do every time you give to help people like Mercedes live full, healthy, and pain-free lives.



Mercedes was already tackling the stairs during our visit.