

Day 4 - Monday, January 18th

Today began early – breakfast by 7am, the Dardon home by 7:30 am and at least the first wave of the medical team and medicines was heading to the rural/jungle school and the septic system crew were off by 7:45 am. Everyone was rested and eager to work.

The medical team consisted of five teams that would see patients – an experienced medical person (doctor, a physician/nurse practitioner), a nurse and a nurse/EMT/or such and a translator. Others were assigned to work the pharmacy, in charge of the distribution of the oral medicines, eye glasses, clerical – registering/vitals/etc, triage, and the very important traffic control. After a few years of doing this and doing this out at the rural/jungle school – the needed parts are known to make this work.

And work it does. The school is on break, but Beniscio, the schools principle/administrator – still manages to rally his families to attend. When he reports to us the night before, we have learned that whatever number he gives us is not a patient count, but a family count. So when he reports 100, we know to prepare for 300. The team saw over 314 individuals this afternoon – that is an exhausting day, especially for a first day as many are getting their first taste of what this type of medicine is truly like. And for translators it was exhausting – the mental and physical exhaustion that takes over as the day wears on. Near the end of the day, one of the medical providers wanted to know how to say, “What is your name?” but simple said to the translator in her room “What is my name?” and the translator looked at her kind of funny and said, “Pam.” So it is when you are weary, they had a good laugh. For devotions this evening, we read the story of Aaron holding up the arms of Moses as they grew weary, and we asked who held up our arms this day. As stories were highlighted, or recurring name and story(s) from the clinic was Mike in the midst of crowd control. Mike, due to foot surgery, is still on crutches. Now to be fair, the circumstances described are not due to the people’s impatience (anyone willing to wait 4, 5, up to 6 hours in this hot sun to see a doctor are not impatient), nor rude, nor greedy – this is simply a communication thing – they do what they understand of what they told and others have a hard time telling them not to do it a certain way. If they were told to go to the pharmacy, that is where they would go – even if it meant 45 people would be in one bedroom size classroom. This would create an overwhelming feeling for the provider at hand. Well story after story, our folks would express this overwhelming feeling, the frustration of not being able to communicate otherwise to the folks, and their frustration – and along would come Mike, crutches in hand, banging them together along with his broken Spanish shoos them out of the crowded space.. They would clear the room. After hearing multiple stories of this, one began to wonder if his crutches were wired like cattle prods (they weren’t).

As always, to show their deep appreciation for the medical team coming out, Benisceo (the school’s principle and administrator) and his wife prepared lunch for all those who came out to work. As in any culture, eating together is a significant gesture of gratitude and solidarity.

The crew out at the School of the Saints working on the septic system were prepared for a HARD day of digging. The ground they were to work up was hard – pick axe would be the primary tool, the only value of the shovel was to move the loose dirt out of the trench. They would lay tile lines from the school to a holding tank and then out into a leech field – they were preparing to lay over 400 feet of trenches – ranging from 12-18 inches to whatever it would take to create the slope necessary to carry away the liquids. Even with the crew from the plantation to help with this hard labor, they would all have their fill of labor the next couple of days. The day was nothing less than anticipated. They too would have their laughs. As Bob was resting a bit, with pick axe in hand (now Bob is a hard worker), one of the plantation guys pulled the pick axe out from under him and with a smile on his face said to the effect “No siesta for you.” And as the day wore on and about 100 feet of trenches were dug and they were working on the grade to create a slope, Larry held his hands up to indicate how much more they had to go down, about six inches more. The Guatemalan looked with an expression of shock and aghast, then motioned a distance of an inch. Larry again motioned for 6-8 inches. The Guatemalan again an inch. Then with smiles and chuckles by both, he went back to digging. By the end of the day, they had the lines dug from the school to the holding tank to the junction box – good progress, through for the most part these would be the shallow lines. Their good news was that Estuardo was able to line up a backhoe for the next day to finish the digging. They would still have plenty of hard work hauling rock into the trenches and the dirt away, but hopefully the digging will be at a minimum.

The school desk construction crew began the morning by drilling holes in our four inch pipe for the leech fields – about 350 feet of tile needed to have a pair holes drilled every six inches. This went fast and well. And the crew spent much of the rest of the day hunting to find what was needed. Last year, we finished our week by organizing everything we used, but during the year the Dardon house had some major repairs done. Everything had to be moved out of the house, thus many things got rearranged. For a while we wondered if any of our organization was worth it. Eventually we found what we were looking for and were about to have four of our eight stations up and running before the days end. This allowed some of us to begin cutting out desk parts while Don continued to work on the next stations. It worked well. With the construction crew divided this year, our hopes and goals will not compete with last years totals – we hope to complete 20-24 desks before the week ends.

As mentioned earlier, part of our devotions for the evening was to express who helped hold our arms up while we grew weary – it was a litany of gratitude. Good stories – thankful hearts – a team at work.

The day end with a vain search for ice cream – we were too late and everything was closed up. And then the water pressure was at a minimum. Some got a short shower – others were regulated to a cold, cold pool. It was cold, but at least the first layer of the grime got washed off.