



MMEXME Mexico Medical Missions

Serving the People of the Sierra Madre

Dear Friends of Mexico Medical Missions,

Summer is upon us, and this summer promises to be even busier than usual. The work at the hospital continues unabated with outpatient visits, births, surgeries and specialty outreaches. We will host two eye surgery “brigadas” this summer in addition to our regular surgery program. These are always exciting times for us as hundreds of patients with eye problems crowd into the hospital seeking care for problems such as cataracts and strabismus. Blind Tarahumaras who are literally led into the hospital by the hand will leave seeing. What an opportunity to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with these people who can literally say, “I was blind, but now I see.”

We are in the midst of a massive food distribution program among the Tarahumara. The rains came late last summer resulting in a disastrous crop failure. In cooperation with Cottonwood Church of Dublin, Texas, we obtained a \$50,000 grant from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to purchase food. Since March we have been hauling 40 tons of food a month to remote villages afflicted by famine. Word of our famine relief efforts spread as far as Mexico City, and Gerber sent us an entire truckload of baby food. (77,000 jars!) Several of the pharmaceutical companies also sent truckloads of medicines. The program will continue until September at which time we hope to see a better crop coming in for the Tarahumaras.

This summer will also see the beginning of a shift in the strategic vision of Mexico Medical Missions. For years we have been a hospital based ministry; but we have always carried the hope of moving out into the villages with an effective Community Health Evangelism program. The people of the Sierra Madre are scattered throughout a vast area, and it is simply not practical to expect that most Tarahumaras and members of other tribal groups can come to the hospital for their healthcare needs. Ideally, healthcare should begin in the villages, as should the presentation of the Gospel. In other words, the hospital should support community work, not the other way around.

This summer, the Shank family will complete their move to the village of Santa Rita where they will live in their newly completed home. The 1970’s vintage Unimog all-terrain vehicle has been replaced with a newer model enabling more reliable transport to this extremely remote area.

Midwife Susie Martin has finished her language studies in Chihuahua City, and has moved to Samachique to help with the establishment of a native midwife training program in the Tarahumara villages.

Edwin and Shelly Rivera (and their three daughters) will be joining us in August. Shelly also is a midwife, and in partnership with Susie Martin, will be working to train native women in safer birthing practices and basic preventative healthcare. Edwin will help coordinate the work in the various villages, as well as providing much-needed leadership for part of the hospital staff.

The El Cuervo clinic will be finished this summer. Missionaries Rudolfo and Elizabeth Rivero (and two daughters) will be moving there to begin ministering to the 700 inhabitants of this extremely remote Tarahumara village.

Missionary Jonathan Pinkham returns after a leave of several months to resume his “hiking” ministry to otherwise inaccessible areas of the Sierra Madre.

Doctor Carmen Reyes will be returning after a leave of absence to begin working in the remote Tarahumara village of Gabellan, which is accessible only by foot. Carmen, dentist Josepha Peña and nurse Mari de los Angeles will be attending a Community Health Evangelism conference in Mexico City this July to learn new approaches to community work.

The Pamachi clinic, staffed by nurse Mayra Rivera, is undergoing remodeling that will add two rooms. Construction should be finished this summer. Please pray for a ministry partner for Mayra in this lonely, isolated place.

Perhaps the most exciting development is the arrival of the newly completed CompAir 8 air ambulance at our hangar in El Paso. The plane will receive some final modifications before entering into service in Mexico. This is a STOL (short take-off and landing) aircraft which will serve the remote villages of the Sierra Madre. This summer, pilot Mark Egolf and mechanic Dave Hardin will be moving the plane to Samachique and completing their living quarters at the new hangar in Samachique.

The Mexican government has approached us about becoming the “official” health care provider for the Tarahumaras in our area. (sort of like being the “designated healthcare provider” in an American HMO) We’re still negotiating the details with the government, but one potential advantage of such an arrangement would be unrestricted access into all the villages in our part of the Sierra Madre mountains.

On the US front, our administrative partnership with Equip didn’t work out as either party had expected. Therefore, all administrative functions have returned to the Colorado office under the direction of the Mexico Medical Missions board of directors. Equip will continue

to help us with the air ambulance program via their missionaries Mark Egolf and Dave Hardin. Please send any donations or correspondence to the Glenwood Springs address.

This summer promises to be exciting, challenging and exhausting with lots of new developments. Please pray that the Lord gives us the strength and wisdom to navigate these new waters.

Blessings – Michael Berkeley