



Mission of Love



"You are not here to save the world, but are here to touch the hands that are within your reach."

Casa Guatemala - Mission of Love January 1, 2009

With sharing, comes love. With love, comes peace!

Rashid Abdu M.D.

On a cold morning on January first, 2009, Bob Price picked me up early in the morning, heading for our trip with the Mission of Love to Guatemala. Kathleen Price, the Founder and Director of the Mission of Love, had sent 75,000 pounds of building material, medical/dental equipment, and other supplies to Guatemala, some times in December. Kathy founded Mission of Love about 20 years ago. During her travel with her husband, Bob, to Mexico, she visited a clinic on the Island of Isla Mujeres and found that she had more medicine in their medicine cabinet at home, than there were in the clinic! From that day forward, Kathy has dedicated her life to helping the poorest of the poor in all parts of the United States and the world. This time, it was the Casa Guatemala, an orphanage, of about 250 children, on the shores of Rio Dulce, about 250 miles northeast of Guatemala City.

It was at the request of another visionary, Angie Galdamez, originally from Honduras, a widow, mother and grandmother, who 30 years ago, visited an orphanage in Guatemala City, and witnessed malnourished, and ill cared-for orphans, that kindled the flame of love in her heart. Like Kathy Price's experience in Mexico, she decided to devote her life and resources to those who have no voice and no hope, the orphans. It is not strange that these two mothers and grandmothers became close friends, each in her own way, making the difference in the lives of those less fortunate.

The 15 volunteers with the Mission of Love came from Ohio, California and Florida. Many of us were repeaters. The mission was to build a greenhouse so the orphans can grow vegetables, protected from the elements, including vampire bats! The 15 of us volunteers, headed by Kathy Price and her husband Bob, met in Houston, Texas, and then flew together to Guatemala City, followed by a 6 hour drive across beautiful mountains, and then by boat to the orphanage. There, all the lumber, that had been delivered from Youngstown in advance, in an Air Force C5, was in large piles at the water edge, about 0.4 miles from the building site! Kathy has a long standing arrangement with the Air Force to send large shipments through the Denton program. The program allows a charitable organization to send shipments to any part of the world, free of charge. Through this program, Kathy has sent large quantities, including school furniture and supplies, ambulances and even fire trucks! She is the largest user of the Denton Program in the United States. Her 50th shipment, of 35,000 pounds to Peru, was just before we left for Guatemala.

On our arrival at the orphanage, our volunteers started to work immediately, carrying the heavy lumber, including the 2"x10"x16' to the building site. There was also the



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extremely heavy 5"x4" by 16' posts. Kathy purchased this steel-like post, locally. This wood was so heavy; they had difficulty driving nails through it. They called it "devils wood"! Our volunteers received help from the locals, including the older orphans, who carried more than their weight! They are hard working people with strength and stamina almost unmatched.

The orphanage is a village-like setting, with several basic buildings that house the administrative building, school, volunteers and the orphans, who range in age from infancy to 18 years old. There is only two hour a day of electricity, between 6:30 and 8:30 PM. The small generator depends on gasoline availability. Consequently, there is no refrigeration, so any fresh meat or fish has to be consumed on that day. All the children looked healthy, and happy and well cared for. Angie thinks of them as her own children. All activities are geared for the children's well being and safety.

There is a clinic manned by two volunteer nurses from Spain. There is school with mostly volunteer teachers, or those with small pay. After the 6th grade, Angie tries to raise fund for scholarships for those qualified to go to high school and beyond. At the same time, she owns the "Hotel Backpackers" with its restaurant, where many orphans work and get the experience they need to function in the real world that lies beyond the security of the orphanage. Angie knows where each child is, what he or she is doing, whether their needs are met, and what their aims and aspirations are.

Each child knows his/her duties within this great "family", according to ability and age. I was impressed to see them engaged in those activities. They looked happy and proud of what they were doing. I saw them washing their laundry in the river and hanging it to dry on clothes lines in the sun. I saw them work in the kitchen, preparing, cooking, and cleaning. I saw little boys and girls standing around a galvanized sink, next to the front door of the kitchen-dining room, like little brothers and sisters, washing the after-breakfast plastic dishes without the slightest discord!. I saw a little girl, no more than four or five years old, filling a small water container in the river, carrying it to the balcony of the office building's second floor, and watering the many potted plants. She looked so proud and happy that she was doing her job! I saw them helping the volunteers, carrying lumber, and stones, and the older ones pounding nails high on the building frame. But also I saw them play like brothers and sisters, in the water, in the school yard, and wherever the opportunity presented itself, and each flashed a smile that was contagious and heart warming. Many parents can learn from this orphanage on how to raise their children!

Besides our volunteers building an 90x30 foot greenhouse, there were other volunteers, college students from Colorado and Wisconsin, who were building a classroom house. They too, were hauling building material, including stones, on their backs for a long distance. I was most impressed to see these young people come from faraway places, at their own expense, building, teaching, treating and nurturing these children. They come from all over the world, because they believe in what Angie is doing, and want to take part in this



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noble cause. It restores my faith and my hope in the new generation that believes in sharing. With sharing, comes love. With love, comes peace!

I met a young volunteer, from England. He has been working at the orphanage, teaching and working with the orphans on the village farm for a year and a half. They plant corn, vegetables, fruit trees, and raise cows, pigs, chickens, ducks and goats, for orphanage consumption. He was relatively a well to do Englishman, but when he found Casa Guatemala on the internet, he decided to visit. He returned to England and sold his restaurant, and came back. His future plans are to visit his parents in England once in a while, and after they are gone, to return and live and work at the orphanage permanently.

Both, Kathy and Angie, have one thing in common: Each is making a difference in the lives not only of those who are less fortunate, but in the lives of those who discover themselves through their work, like the hundreds, may be thousands of volunteers, who were given the opportunity to see, to share and to love. Perhaps we did help the orphans a little during our short stay, but they gave us much more. The children made us better and our lives richer, than before we arrived.

I will always be grateful for the opportunity. Thank you Kathy. Thank you Angie.
Rashid A. Abdu, M.D.