For Glenda, the day her son was born turned quickly from joy to fear. Aldo had a life-threatening deformity and needed immediate surgery. The colostomy was a temporary fix, but she couldn’t afford surgery to permanently correct the defect. So she took Aldo home. And she cared for him, lovingly. Swaddled him in rags, constantly changing him, cleaning him, tending to his skin.

Weeks turned into months, and years. She longed for healing for her son.

When Aldo was three, Glenda heard Faith In Practice physicians were coming to a village two hours from her home. Taking a leap of faith, she brought Aldo to the Chenault Team. They referred him to Hilario Galindo Hospital, in far-off Retalhuleu, where a Faith In Practice team would be providing surgeries.

Later that year, Glenda and Aldo set off on yet another journey, along with Juan de la Cruz, our faithful Guatemalan volunteer. They rode through the mountains, hours passing as the cliffs turned to hills, and then plains, as they neared the sea. Six buses and eight hours later, Aldo was one step closer to living a normal life.

The Maddox Team, however, determined they couldn’t operate on Aldo because of the complexity of his case. But Glenda’s journey was not in vain. There was another possibility, another Faith In Practice team that might bring healing. So Glenda and Aldo went home and waited, and prayed, while CEO Rev. Linda McCarty carried Aldo’s medical records to Houston, and while the Glass Team— including pediatric anesthesiologist Dr. Nancy Glass and pediatric surgeon Dr. Oluyinku Olutoye—reviewed his files. They too waited, while the months passed. Then both surgical team and patient made a journey of hope, this time to Las Obras in Antigua, where Aldo—now 4—finally received his life changing surgery.

Both Aldo and the team came away changed.

“The love that Aldo and his mother showed each other radiated to all of us,” recalled volunteer Susan Fernbach, who worked with Aldo as the ward nurse. The team would never forget Glenda’s gratitude and loving care for her son, who charmed them during his days at the Obras, and then in the safe haven of Casa de Fe.

Dr. Olutoye said it was a privilege to participate. “The calling is to be an answer to people’s prayers,” he said. “In times like these, you feel a bit like you might have been.”

A week later, Aldo and Glenda returned home with Juan de la Cruz, who made each trip by their side, and who will return with them to Antigua next year, when Aldo is scheduled for a final minor surgery. While Glenda and Aldo’s road has been long, they have not traveled it alone. Juan de la Cruz, and the Chenault, Maddox, and Glass Teams all journeyed beside Aldo in this life changing way. We thank them for their faith and commitment that is making all the difference in the lives of this mother and son.
Jesús Ramirez does not consider himself extraordinary. And yet, all who know him would choose ‘extraordinary’ as the word to best describe him. Everyone knows Jesús to be a man of honor and integrity, who quietly motivates others to service. One who always gives credit to God for everything that he does or has achieved. One who is tireless and creative in the many ways he seeks to meet the needs of his community in El Progreso, Guatemala.

Placing his faith into practice is who Jesús Ramirez is. Jesús inspired, organized, and mobilized his community to build and staff a school in El Progreso, because the poor children there had none. Jesús led the building of a medical clinic, and recruited and supports the physician who works there. And Jesús has served as one of our committed volunteer network directors for years, personally organizing Faith In Practice medical clinics in El Progreso and accompanying patients to Casa de Fe throughout the year so they may receive their surgeries at the Obras. Recently, Jesús encouraged Faith In Practice to equip a new dental clinic and a cervical cancer screening clinic in the medical building, his dream made a reality in July.

There are so many blessings in this ministry, one of which is to serve beside committed Guatemalans who care deeply for the poor of their communities and who want desperately to do something about it. But, often they do not have the resources to address these needs. It is our honor to labor beside them, giving them whatever assistance we can, so that together we can serve as one, witnessing to the love of Christ in all we do. Jesús inspires us to work harder, be more creative, love deeper, be more like him in all that we do. Jesús Ramirez, one of our heroes.

FATHER HENRI NOUWEN HAD A UNIQUE GIFT FOR SEEING BEAUTY AND DESCRIBING IT PERFECTLY. AS I READ THIS NEWSLETTER, FATHER NOUWEN’S WORDS CAME TO MIND, SO I AM SHARING THEM WITH YOU.

“Community is like a large mosaic. Each little piece seems so insignificant. One piece is bright red, another cold blue or dull green, another warm purple, another sharp yellow, another shining gold. Some look precious, others ordinary…. Some look gaudy, others delicate. As individual stones, we can do little with them except compare them and judge their beauty and value. When, however, all these little stones are brought together in one big mosaic portraying the face of Christ, who would ever question the importance of any one of them. If one of them, even the least spectacular one, is missing, the face is incomplete. Together in the one mosaic, each little stone is indispensable and makes a unique contribution to the glory of God. That’s community, a fellowship of people who together make God visible in the world.”

The glory of God made manifest as many individuals came together across time and distance, across language and culture, to heal little Aldo. Made manifest in the audacity to believe in the impossible, as the Thompsons travel across Guatemala to bring knowledge and health, and their vision lives on with the Guatemalans who, too, have believed and are treating the women of their villages. A man named Jesús inspiring those who live in the United States to be more faithful as we serve side by side. The glory of God shining through laughter as those at a comedy club lend their gifts and talents to serve those who live in a land they have never seen.

So many precious colored stones uniquely contributing to the glory of God as one. A beautiful, resplendent, glorious community making God visible in the world. Thanks be to God for each and every one of you for the many ways you make God visible in the world. It is a privilege to serve beside you.

A RESPLENĐENT COMMUNITY

www.faithinpractice.org
San Agustín Community Celebrates Clinic Openings

On July 10, Houston and Guatemalan staff joined Jesús Ramirez and local supporters at the dedication of newly equipped dental and VIA/Cryo clinics, funded by Faith In Practice, at La Clinica Santa Maria de los Angeles. The day was joyous, filled with skits from the youth of the community, speeches, marimba music, an official ribbon-cutting ceremony, and the blessing by the local priest. Throughout the day, we all felt God's spirit gently renewing and creating relationships as we came together as one to serve the poor. We give thanks for all that God has done and will do through these clinics.

Las Obras Audiology Clinic Near Completion

Thanks to Larry and Sarah Barker, Mark and Christine Hoeplinger, Jackie Phillips, and Médicos en Acción, the Obras Audiology Clinic is nearing completion. This beautiful new clinic has a sound-proof room, double-paned glass in all areas, and state-of-the-art audiology equipment. With this new clinic, our audiologists can better test and treat their patients and our medical teams have a place to refer their patients who are receiving solar-powered hearing aids in the villages. Together, Faith In Practice and the Obras can now better give the gift of hearing to those living in silence in Guatemala.

This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Joani Spaw, 1959 - 2011. “Joani, your love and laughter will live forever.”
She shyly handed me the paper she had folded into a postage stamp. Opening it, I saw she had been to a Faith In Practice screening clinic in her village one year ago and received treatment to kill her pre-cancerous cervical cells, a treatment that saved her life. She had guarded that paper for one year and now asked if she could see a doctor for a “Prueba Rapida”—a “Rapid Test”. Dr. Peter Thompson had developed this technique, an adaptation from a Johns Hopkins protocol, to identify and treat pre-cancerous cervical cells in the developing world. Nancy Thompson had compassionately complemented the medicine with culturally sensitive training materials, empowering women to seek testing. Traveling throughout Guatemala, the Thompsons had set what many thought an impossible goal: stop women from dying of cervical cancer by teaching local Guatemalans to screen and treat using this technique. Impossible, and yet, she sat before me, asking for a “Prueba Rapida” — a phrase Peter and Nancy coined to describe the test. A phrase women now use across Guatemala as they take charge of their lives and health. Faith In Practice is privileged to honor the Thompsons at our Gala. These two whose dedication, optimism, compassion, and hard work are saving lives. These two for whom nothing is impossible.

Please join us in honoring the Thompsons through a donation or in person at the Gala. 

Learn more at www.faithinpractice.org/2011gala.