Dr. Sean Boutros’ surgical team worked furiously to save 17-year-old Jessica’s life, but it took hours to stabilize her. And, throughout those agonizing hours, Apolinario Lopez, one of Faith In Practice’s dedicated Guatemalan volunteers, sat with Jessica’s mother. Throughout the night, Apolinario sat vigil. Together they prayed for Jessica, told stories of Jessica. Apolinario never left her mother’s side, all night long.

Apolinario was present, because he knew all about waiting. His young son, Leopoldo, was born with a cleft lip and palate in November 2006. First, Apolinario waited to bring his tiny baby to a Faith In Practice clinic led by Dr. Bob Burton and Wendy Robinson. The clinic was held in the Petén, one of the poorest and most remote areas of Guatemala. And, then he waited again for Faith In Practice surgeon Becky McGraw-Wall to operate on Leo. And, then again for the second surgery needed to complete the repair.

But, rather than simply saying ‘thank you’ to God and Faith In Practice for the miracle of his son’s surgeries, Apolinario decided to say ‘thank you’ with his actions. He became a Faith In Practice volunteer. Now, when not farming his small field, he organizes medical clinics for Faith In Practice. And, then he travels with those who need a surgery to either Las Obras in Antigua or Hilario Galindo in Retalhuleu. And, he sits with them and worries about them, as if they were family.

Apolinario had traveled with 25 patients from the Petén during the week when Jessica received her surgery. And, yet, every single patient received his gentle care and concern. It is hard to imagine what it would be like to travel from your home in Petén with your sick child, not certain of what lay in store. But, with Apolinario at your side, fears are calmed, worries soothed.

To volunteer in this way requires personal sacrifice. In Apolinario’s case, the sacrifice is particularly great, because he can neither read nor write. But, that does not stop him from being there for others, helping to ensure that they receive the care they need. It does not stop him from being with them in the waiting, in the most private and tender moments of their lives as their son or daughter receives a much needed surgery. Nothing stops him from serving in thanks to God and to Faith In Practice for the gift his son received.

Little Leo was born with a cleft lip and palate — a life-threatening birth defect. And, yet, through this seeming tragedy God has brought forth new life and hope not only for Leo, but for Apolinario and those he now serves. New life and hope born as Apolinario sat quietly throughout the night giving comfort to Jessica’s mother. New life and hope in moments yet to come. All to God’s honor, glory and praise.

See Apolinario speak at this year’s Gala. Learn more at www.faithinpractice.org/2012gala
The year 2012 brought another wonderful season of blessings from God. Blessed were the Guatemalan poor — who received healing at the hands of our faithful volunteers. Blessed were our volunteers — who experienced the transformative power of God’s love through those they served. Countless lives touched. And although statistics can never aim to be a measure for the work they represent, they do provide an idea of the impact our volunteers’ and donors’ efforts have on the poor and sick of Guatemala.

Over 1,000 US and 600 Guatemalan volunteers worked together this past season to bring healing to more than 22,300 Guatemalans in need. And we continue striving to be as efficient as possible and always reaching those with the greatest need. As a result we saw a significant increase in our number of surgical referral patients this season. More than 2,100 surgical procedures forever changed the lives of our patients, many of whom had lived in constant pain for years. And throughout their journey of healing, there was a Faith In Practice volunteer holding their hand, providing care and comfort.

“Que Dios los bendiga,” May God bless you, was the common yet powerful phrase uttered by the patients to our volunteers after each screening, after each surgery, after each clinic visit. These blessings reach each and every one of our donors too because they choose to step out in faith and bring healing to people who will never know their name.

Our season statistics represent patients, volunteers and donors coming together as one to do God’s work in Guatemala. All to God’s Glory.

Can we know in our actions, our words and deeds, what they will yield? Yes, we plan, organize, set a direction. We create and manage the budget and we calculate the numbers of volunteers who serve, the number of patients who receive care each year, the dollars raised that make it possible. And, yet, while the numbers are important, the mystery and miracle in this ministry is not, and never has been, in the numbers.

The mystery and miracle lies in what we cannot quantify. It lies in the thirty and sixty and a hundredfold, only a portion of which we will ever know. No one could have planned for the pull on Apolinario’s heart, when he held little Leopoldo in his arms and decided to serve with Faith In Practice all those years ago. The decision which led him to sit beside Jessica’s mother. And, none of us will know what little Leopoldo will achieve in his life, because Dr. Becky McGraw-Wall came to Guatemala or because of the example his father now sets for him. We will never know how the actions of those who serve on the Pharmacy Team to pack medicines will impact a mother in Reu or a baby in Totonicapán. Thirty, sixty, a hundredfold.

And, none of you can know the bounty that awaits those who you will never meet, because you have stepped out in faith to serve through Faith In Practice. The day you signed up for a team, or sent in a check. The seed that one day God will multiply beyond measure. Thirty, sixty, a hundredfold.

Thank you for believing as together we plant small seeds and watch them multiply in ways we could never have imagined. Thank you for believing as together we ask Dr. Stein’s question, “How can we serve better?” and then step forth watching expectantly for the miracle that surely awaits.

Rev. Linda L. McCarty

www.faithinpractice.org
Working as One to Bring Healing

As you read this, the Pharmacy Team is preparing for the season ahead. Nine US volunteers working alongside 15 high school seniors from Jalapa. Students who served with our village team in March, and will do so again this year. Pharmacists and pill packers from across the US, some in Guatemala for the first time, some for the fifth or sixth.

Each year, it is the same: US volunteers who speak little Spanish, Guatemalan teens with little English. Somehow, year after year, they work together as one to prepare the trunks of medicine and supplies that bring healing to thousands.

The process starts months before, when Inventory Director Heather Cox works with Blessings International and Direct Relief, and our faithful volunteer Reed Brooks, to secure the needed medications. We store them in Houston, thanks to Roadrunner, until we have enough to fill a container, sent through Universal Heart. After some weeks, it reaches Antigua. It is there, in the shelter of the dusty warehouse, in the chill of the rainy season, when the Pharmacy Team works. Where no common language is needed as many hands and hearts come together for the common good.

Follow the Team’s blog at faithinpractice.org/blogs-and-media/339.

Charity Navigator 4-Star Rating

For the past eight consecutive years, Faith In Practice has received Charity Navigator’s 4-star rating for fiscal responsibility placing us in the top 1% of all charities rated nationwide. Charity Navigator is America’s largest independent charity evaluator that provides ratings of the financial health and accountability and transparency of thousands of charities in the United States.

According to Ken Berger, Charity Navigator’s President and Chief Executive Officer, “Faith In Practice outperforms most other charities in America. This ‘exceptional’ designation from Charity Navigator differentiates Faith In Practice from its peers and demonstrates to the public it is worthy of their trust.”
How do you do it? That’s what we asked Dr. Fernando Stein. As the Medical Director of the Progressive Care Unit at Texas Children’s Hospital in Houston, Dr. Stein’s patients are children who are at serious risk of dying or who suffer greatly. To see anyone suffer is difficult, but a child? It is one of the most difficult things to experience, to be with children and their parents in moments that hover between life and death. So, we asked the question, “How do you do it?” In response, Dr. Stein simply said, “I ask myself, how can I serve better? And then I follow the answer.”

The answer so simple. The ability to live by those words another thing entirely. But that is exactly what Dr. Stein has done throughout his life. He has dedicated his life, not only to serving children, but to serving the most vulnerable of children. He has done so at Texas Children’s and across Latin America for more than 30 years. Dr. Stein’s CV is more than 80 pages long. Eighty pages in response to the question he asks himself each day. “How can I serve better?” The theme for this year’s Gala is Choosing Life, a fitting theme to honor this man who chooses life each day. For to choose life is to live fully. And to live fully is to ask the question, “How can I serve better?” And, then to go out and serve better. Hundreds of thousands of children have been given the chance to answer that question for themselves, because Dr. Stein answers the same question each day. In fact, his very life is a joyful response to that question. We should all answer it so well.

Please join us at the 2012 Gala to honor this extraordinary Guatemalan pediatrician, Dr. Fernando Stein.

Learn more at www.faithinpractice.org/2012gala