Claudia received her hernia repair under the care of Dr. George Tuchsen. But there were more good things to come. Serving on the Thompson team were plastic and ocular surgeons Dr. Sean Boutros and Dr. Marc Longo. They sat with Claudia and Miriam telling them that the surgeries to reshape Claudia’s face would be significant, hard, but they could help her. Claudia shares, “From the moment I saw them, I was filled with such a joy that they would change me, my face, and take away all I had suffered as a young girl.”

Over the next few years, Claudia underwent several surgeries, the largest of which required her to stay at the Casa de Fe for three months. The transformation is dramatic. Claudia, now 18, is confident, she laughs easily, is strong. She is no longer the little girl who struggled under the weight of being made fun of, of being bullied. She speaks of how a new world has been opened for her. The people she has met, what she has seen. She glows when speaking of her dream to become a nurse, so that she might care for others as she has been cared for.

For Miriam, she says she has seen things even more marvelous than the surgeries. She has seen God’s love, saying, “As the word of God says, you will experience great things and difficult things, but I will be there beside you. I have gone through these difficult things, and God was with me, together with so many good people.” She tells the story of two volunteers who walked beside her as they were rolling her precious daughter into the operating room for her largest surgery. Miriam places her hand
on Claudia’s knee to show us exactly how the woman laid her hand upon Claudia and how she then touched Miriam’s shoulder. Miriam said, “They prayed for us. When they did, all the fear and anxiety left my body and it did not return. I will never forget it.” The Moorhead team’s Nancy Fontaine and Rev. George Bement had no idea what their prayers meant to this family, but as we show Miriam pictures from the team, Miriam does not hesitate. She quickly points out Nancy and George, for her, signs of God journeying beside her when she needed it most.

Miriam and Claudia Alvarez will be present at the Gala: A Rich Harvest in Houston. When we shared with them the name of the Gala, Miriam quickly says, “From the beginning of our journey until this day, the harvest of Faith In Practice is love!” Friendships formed, lives transformed, interwoven and blessed across the years. God’s healing spirit moving among us, creating family. Truly, a rich harvest of love.

Please consider joining us to hear Miriam and Claudia speak at the gala, as they reunite with so many of our volunteers who have journeyed with them across the years.

“See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.” —James 5:7

God has showered early and late rains upon Faith In Practice and we have been blessed beyond measure for it. An abundant harvest that none of us could have anticipated when the initial seeds were planted. And, yet, we see the richness of a harvest emerge in so many wondrous ways. Ways that can only come with time. With shared memories, shared laughter and heartache. With patience.

Our Guatemalan brothers and sisters teach those of us from the United States about patience. About waiting. About the joy that comes because of the waiting. The surprise at how what was growing all along arises in a moment. New and unexpected and yet warm and familiar, because it was meant to be all along. Like coming home.

Father Henri Nouwen speaks of these ‘coming home’ moments as moments that emerge from patience. Moments when we know that all is present: the sorrow and the joy, the expectation and the realization, the searching and the finding, all in a moment. (Compassion, Henri Nouwen paraphrased)

Throughout these pages you will read of how life-long friendships have been forged, family relationships deepened, fleeting moments that shall never leave a family’s memory. The miracle of how God is at work intertwining our lives, creating family among us, within us, across the years. Creating the moments that arise from patience, the moments that define us.

For that is what, it seems, all of our Faith In Practice stories share. The ‘moments of patience’ that somehow have come to define us. Moments that have brought us to our knees in gratitude and wonder. Moments of transcendent grace.

All of the ways, together, we are learning, as Miriam says, to give God thanks in the joys and the sadness, learning to sit together in moments of patience, knowing that God is there beside us, binding us together in love.

Thank you for being a part of the waiting. For sharing with us the joys and the sadness. For sharing your moments of patience. Moments that are surely signs of God’s rich harvest of love.

—Rev. Linda L. McCarty
The Ties That Bind: The McClanahans

“Our parents, Dale and June McClanahan, raised us to believe that service was paramount to a life well-lived.”
—Debbie McClanahan Luhnau

Dale and June McClanahan are no longer with us, but their legacy is rich and far-reaching. Three generations of McClanahans have served in Guatemala. Interwoven into their family stories is Guatemala. Guatemala drawing them closer as family, deepening their faith.

A nurse, Sam ventured forth first in 1996, encouraged by his faith-family at Sugar Land First United Methodist Church. Followed by his parents, Dale and June, then his sisters, Becca and Debbie and Debbie’s husband Scott. Caitlin, Sam’s daughter, finally received her wish to join her father, while Cassie, her mother, kept the home fires burning. Cassie finally joining the family this past year. Thirty trips, thousands of prayers, helping with events, raising funds across the years. A family affair.

Their stories across the years are marked by memories of Guatemala. The time Caitlin served with her father and decided she wanted to be a nurse, rather than study music. Years later when she served beside him as a new nurse, dissolving into laughter as they, exhausted, sang to the very last patient to help him awake from anesthesia after a long, hard, day shared together. Scott and Debbie serving side by side, until the very last column at the Casa de Fe was stained and shining. Cassie receiving the photo of the young man who held a picture of himself when two years old. The picture his mother had cherished across the years also pictured her husband, Sam, fifteen years earlier.

Dale and Debbie, father and daughter, sitting side by side, counting pills in the Guatemalan warehouse in tribute to, and in mourning for, June. The estate-gift Dale left Faith In Practice as he then joined his wife June shortly thereafter.

All the memories that are intertwined and overflow as this family seeks to live out the rich legacy Dale and June left them—the greatest gift, a life-well lived in service. Lived in service, together.

The McClanahan children and their extended family will be present at the Gala in memory of and in gratitude for their beloved parents.

Please see stories of other Faith In Practice families at faithinpractice.org/rich-harvest-families.

Boundless Energy: Ana Garcia

Seven years ago, a young woman began volunteering with Faith In Practice. Her childhood had been tragic involving an abusive step-father and 7 step-siblings to care for. As an adult, she earned her living by selling home-cooked food which barely supported her two young children. Life was hard, yet nothing could contain her joyful heart, her enthusiastic hope. Not only would she survive, she would find a way to help others.

Seven years later, Ana Garcia is dressed in scrubs, in the midst of the busyness of the cervical cancer screening course. An instructor, she is also a recent graduate from auxiliary nursing school. Ana serves on all of our medical clinic teams and still finds time to volunteer at every Hilario Galindo Hospital triage clinic. Ana is boundless energy and optimism. Her enthusiasm is contagious. Never speaking of her own accomplishments, Ana gives God thanks first and then she says that Faith In Practice is her family.

Ana would say that Faith In Practice has changed her life. The truth is, however, that it is we who have been changed. Inspired by her resilience, her determination. Blessed by every single one of her famous hugs. Privileged to glimpse the world through her joyful eyes. Grateful that God has brought Ana Garcia into our lives. Grateful that she is family.
Thursday, October 22
Westin Galleria • Houston

Featuring
The Moorhead Family

Special Guests
Claudia and Miriam Alvarez

Chairs
Dr. and Mrs. Marc Longo

Learn more at
faithinpractice.org/gala

New Heights: Hilario Galindo

Construction is in full swing! Hilario Galindo Hospital is bustling as construction workers fill the halls and the hospital staff scurries to prepare for the missions that are soon to arrive. It is an exciting time. Much has been done and there is much yet to do.

Through it all, we are blessed by the gracious, patient and kind Larry Barker who is shepherding us through the construction. We could not be doing this without him. Nor without you. So thank you!

Follow the progress at faithinpractice.org/hilariogalindo

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