Mission from the hEART 2015

On May 3, 2015, members of the Utah State University Student Academy of Audiology embarked on their 11th “Mission from the hEART”. The organization and logistics were planned in conjunction with Dr. Natalie Goldgewicht of Clínica Auditiva in Costa Rica and Fundación Lloverá Comida. Students traveled around the country to provide hearing services to underprivileged communities. They visited several elderly care centers, Bendición Hogar Santa María (Children’s Home), Centro Dormitorio San Jose (Homeless Shelter), and the Helen Keller Community Center. During the week they provided hearing tests to approximately 450 individuals and fit over 60 of them with hearing aids. They also provided cerumen management and made medical referrals. Each patient will be tracked for follow up services. In collaboration with Peak ENT, Dr. Joe Dansie fit 5 bone anchored hearing softband systems to pre-identified children.

Mission Volunteers
Heather Jensen, AuD  
Jeffery Larsen, PhD  
Brittany Martinez  
Suzy Reed  
Whitney Olson  
Alex Meibos  
Hannah McLeod  
Christina Heitzinger  
Johnny Foster, AuD  
Joe Dansie, AuD  
Natalie Goldgewicht, AuD  
Quin Card, AuD  
Dave Schlothauer  
Hunter Jensen  
Kade Jensen

My favorite thing about going to Costa Rica was working with the people there. They were so genuinely nice and appreciative of what we were doing and it was awesome to see how our presence and work was helping them.  
-Christina Heitzinger

So grateful for the opportunity I had to work with amazing people in Costa Rica. Nothing quite like seeing someone’s face light up when we fit them with their first hearing aid and they realize a whole new world, full of sounds they didn’t even know existed, just opened up for them. First humanitarian mission but definitely not the last. I’m ready to go back!  
-Brittany Bown

I loved being able to go to Costa Rica to provide a service for people who have such limited access to hearing healthcare. In addition to seeing life through the eyes of another culture, I gained confidence in myself as a clinician. The mission was an incredible learning experience for me, made doubly rewarding by seeing the reactions of all the people we were able to help.  
-Joshua Pluim
This mission was possible because of the work and help of many thoughtful and caring individuals. The USU Student Academy of Audiology held fundraisers for the mission including custom ear mold sales, Yankee Candle Co. fundraising, and a Silent Auction & Movie night. Generous donations were received from the USU Communicative Disorders & Deaf Education department, USU Hearing Clinic patients, friends, and relatives. The Starkey Hearing Foundation donated hearing aids, earmolds, and batteries. Westone donated ear mold material and supplies. Rayovac supplied batteries for the hearing aids. Bionix contributed cerumen removal supplies. Peak ENT Associates donated additional supplies, hearing aids, and equipment, and also worked with Oticon Medical and Cochlear Americas to acquire donations to supply 5 children with bone anchored hearing aid softband systems. The travel agency, Memorable Costa Rica, arranged our transportation and housing accommodations. Clínica Auditiva and Fundación Lloverá Comida coordinated the locations and invited patients to attend the audiology events. With personal donations we were also able to provide blankets, food, and hygiene items to the Centro Dormitorio homeless shelter. We appreciate the toothbrushes donated by Thompson Orthodontics and Brent Gray of Mountain Vista Dental.

The dynamics of our group (from high school lacrosse players to seasoned audiologists) offered a unique experience. For some, this was their second and or third mission to Costa Rica. I really enjoyed how we were able to work together as a team to accomplish our daily goals, and how everyone had something to offer regardless of previous experience or skill levels.

-Alex Meibos

It is very rewarding to be able to help people. The kids and adults we worked with in Costa Rica were so grateful for our help. One older woman was so grateful that she kissed me on the cheek and said, “Dios te bendiga”. I feel like her blessing was realized in my being able to participate in this humanitarian mission.

-Dr. Jeff Larsen

For additional pictures of our work in Costa Rica or to donate to future missions, please visit www.usuaudiology.com
Or email us at audiology.usu@gmail.com