

## 2024 Medical Mission Report: Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

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This year marked my 6<sup>th</sup> year participating with the Mending Faces Mission trip. Each year I prepare for an exciting and new experience with this group. I work as a nurse in the pre op and the post op during these missions. Mending Faces is a non-profit organization that provides no cost cleft lip and cleft palate surgeries to children in 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries. The foundation also provides transportation and housing for the families during the process of these surgeries. Without these surgeries people born with cleft lip and or cleft palate abnormalities are often shunned from society, lack proper nutrition because of eating difficulties, and have trouble with normal speech. Having this surgery is an important part of these children having a normal life.

Our first day at the hospital is a busy day of getting all the equipment and supplies to the hospital and setting up a working operating room, pre and post op, and a recovery ward. Each of us from Colorado bring with us 2 large suitcases full of medical equipment and supplies to care for our patients. Each missioner pays their flight, the cost of the hotel and food during the trip. We had 28 missioners this year. We had people who traveled from Norway, Peru, Switzerland, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and America. The medical supplies are purchased with funds from fundraisers and generous contributors. I am always amazed how well everything comes together. While those of us that work in the operating room, pre and post op set up our equipment and supplies the anesthesiologist and pediatric nurses do physicals on the children that have come to the hospital in hopes of receiving this life changing surgery.



This year we had 80 patients ranging from 6 months to 20 years come to the Hospital Clinica Cruz Jiminian in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. After each child has had a chest x-ray, blood work and physical exam it was decided that 54 children were healthy enough to have the repair of their cleft lip or cleft palate. Most of these children have never had a chance to have good medical care. Many have traveled long distances to get their surgery. Three families had traveled across the border from Haiti risking their lives.



May 6 through May 10 we did an average of 12 surgeries per day. This year was most successful year with the number of volunteers and only 3 operating room tables. We completed 53 successful surgeries. One of the babies we unfortunately couldn't get an IV started because she was too dehydrated and too small. Mending Faces organizers will help her family get her there next year for her surgery. This year we completed 40 cleft palate and 14 cleft lips. The children and their families were so gracious. I am proud of my work with Mending Faces. Since 2010 Mending Faces have completed more than 900 surgeries in the Philippines, El Salvador, and Dominican Republic. It has been a privilege to be able to help these children have a life that is full of peer acceptance, good nutrition and successful relationships.



All photos courtesy Teresa Ballard.