

## Winter 2007

## And SHE Returned to Give Thanks

Peace and Greetings in 2007! A wonderful story to share with you:

A few years ago Grace couldn't hold a sewing needle with her fingers, nor could she pick up a pot from the stove. Worst of all—she couldn't hold her little boy in her arms for any length of time.

Due to nerve damage caused by Hansen's disease, Grace lacked the necessary strength in her arms and hands and was losing sensation in her feet. Grace was then blessed to be the first Hansen's patient in Ecuador to receive the "miracle" nerve release surgery. The results were so incredibly positive that she decided to return for more surgery the following year.

Not long after the second surgery, Grace became pregnant with her second child. Annie was born last July 26th, which just happened to be my birthday! Upon hearing the baby's name over the phone her son asked, "When can I see my sister Annie?"

I took this photo of Grace, Alberto, and my Annie at the office in January when Grace returned to say "Thank you." I too say "Thank you" and may our Loving Creator bless you twofold for making miracles happen at Damien. My love and prayers are with you always.



**Grace, Alberto and Annie**

YOUR Sister Annie  
Ann Credidio, BVM



**Above: Patients post-surgery  
Below: Team at work**



## We DO Believe in Miracles!

Annie's Angels made miracles happen once again. During the second week of November, the group of surgeons, nurses, anesthesiologists, support staff, and volunteers from the US teamed up to perform 35 surgeries in all! Dr. King and his crack team performed 10 total knee replacements for patients of the Luis Vernaza Hospital in Guayaquil. Doctors Jim Wilton, Phil Anderson, Jay Erickson, and Scott Nickerson joined forces with their crews to perform 26 nerve decompression surgeries (NDS) on patients from Damien House.

The NDS restores sensation to the peripheral nerves and can help prevent paralysis of the extremities. Dr. Wilton, presenting to a group of young medical students at *La Universidad Catolica* in Guayaquil, presented an analogy to help explain the objectives: "Imagine your nerve as a water hose – the effects of Hansen's places pressure on the hose and prevents blood flow and nutrients from reaching the extremities; hence the cells die. The nerve surgery takes the foot off the hose – it relieves pressure, increases flow, and rejuvenates the cells."

These surgeries not only help our Damien family, but also are being used as a study to show the efficacy for this operation as treatment for patients worldwide. David Seiler and Jennifer Hughes-Downey, using very precise and accurate PSSD machines, took pre-op and one year post-op measurements of patients for these studies. The two trained Jonathan Noboa, an employee and former patient, and Adam Beitscher, a Rostro de Cristo volunteer, to do the tests as well. With a special thanks to Dr. Lee Dellon for the gift of the machine, Jonathan and Adam will be able to continue tests at 3 month intervals for better, more accurate results. We believe that these tests will have great results for the betterment of all Hansen's sufferers.

Our staff worked incredibly hard to make the surgeries such a success. The Foundation was the site of not only the pre-op consultations, but also the complete post-op care. Our employees devoted an extraordinary amount of time and effort to find the space and resources to provide excellent care to all of the surgical patients throughout their month-long stay. The combination of our incredible staff with the amazing medical team made the surgeries a resounding success, yet again, and has helped all of us believe that miracles really can happen!



**Above: Jennifer and Jonathan testing Emma  
Below: Patients showing off their bandages**



## At Last...Ministry of Health Recognizes Hansen's Patients

For the first time ever, officials from the Ministry of Public Health in charge of the national program to fight Hansen's disease visited Damien House. The public authorities came to celebrate the World Leprosy Day, January 28th, through sharing of food and song.

This was the first time patients here at Damien have met the public officials working against Hansen's, and the patients lost no time in making their concerns and desires be known. First and foremost, the patients gave a clear message to the authorities that they want to fight the social stigma of the disease and change the name from leprosy to its proper term of Hansen's disease.



**Representatives from Ministry of Health speaking with patients.**

The coordinator of the program, Licensed Nurse Elizabeth Quito, stated the Ministry's excitement that the number of new cases has decreased greatly. She cited the fact that only two new cases were reported in January of 2007. While the authorities announced they would be taking as many as 60 excursions to look for new patients in the Province of Guayas this year, the Foundation expressed its deep concern that not enough was being done to find new cases in the countryside. The majority of the patients at the Foundation come from rural areas, namely from the provinces of Los Rios and Lojas and there is simply not enough effort on the part of the public authorities to find new cases in these areas.

We do believe that the presence of the ministry of Health with Hansen patients is a sign of hope for an improved working relationship between the officials and the Foundation.



**Adam, Maximo, and Heidi**



**(L-R) Ricardo, Alison, and Kate**

## Physical Therapists

Damien House patients recently began to take advantage of the newest project here at the Foundation—physical therapy. Kate Buchheit and Heidi Bechtold, two PTs from the USA, volunteered their time and expertise here during the second week of January. The two trained Rostro de Cristo volunteers Adam Beitscher and Alison Quinn in basic pt so that the patients will continue to receive this service. This is an example of Damien tries to provide complete medical services to all of the patients here.

## New Website Launched

Damien House is very excited to announce that we have launched a new website! The new site, [www.thedamienhouse.org](http://www.thedamienhouse.org), features patient stories, a Damien House presentation to help share the Foundation with friends and family, and much more! Special thanks to Sharon Marotta, the Pedrick family, and Erin Guy for all the work they have done to make our website the valuable resource it is!

## Goodsearch for Damien!

Want to help raise money for Damien House with the click of a button? Go to [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com) for all of your web searches, type in Damien House, and the Foundation will receive money for every search made! Share this with friends and family so together we can really make a difference!

**Stay connected - receive our ENewsletter filled with updates, patient's stories, and more!  
Please email us at [damienhouse@gmail.com](mailto:damienhouse@gmail.com).**