



# PLASTICOS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Issue 1

Summer 2003

## Founding Volunteers

- Larry Nichter, MD, MS. - President and CEO
- Jed Horowitz, MD. - Vice President
- Denise Cucurny, MA. - Director of Operations
- Robert Burns, MD, Ph.D. - Treasurer
- Tim Glassett, MBA, JD - Secretary and Fundraising Chair
- Ruthann Burns - Administrator and Travel Facilitator

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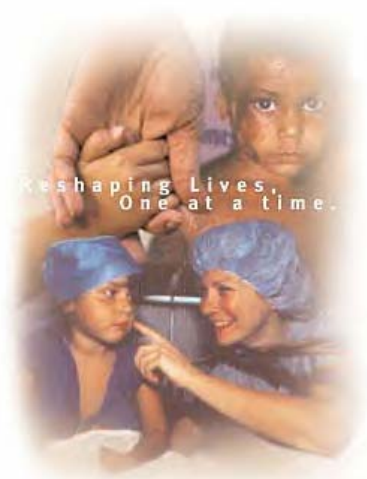
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## What is Plasticos Foundation?

*Plasticos Foundation* is a group of plastic surgeons and other medical personnel who travel to developing nations performing free surgeries. We believe all individuals, especially the young, negatively affected by correctable deformities deserve to be made whole. The majority of our patients are children with birth defects or traumatic injuries. An important part of our mission is to work with local surgeons to train them in the techniques and procedures required for plastic/ reconstructive surgery. In that way, our work continues after we are gone. Our philosophy is captured

in the ancient Chinese proverb, "Give me a fish, and I eat for a day. Teach me to fish, and I eat for a lifetime."

We are a southern California based organization. In the current political climate we like to think of ourselves as ambassadors of goodwill creating a bridge between the United States and those in need. It is estimated that 90% of the world's reconstructive surgical needs are in third world countries reflecting the critical need for our organization.



**"In the current political climate we like to think of ourselves as ambassadors of goodwill creating a bridge between the United States and those in need."**

## History of Plasticos Foundation



Dedicated to the memory of Dr. Carol A. Bryant, whose love and support enabled the dream of *Plasticos* to become a reality.

In 1985, Larry Nichter, M.D. went on his first volunteer surgical mission to Honduras. The trip changed his life. Over the years he continued working with various medical volunteer organizations. He has been team leader on more than 34 missions and has personally changed the life of more than 2500 children.



**Larry Nichter,  
Founder**

With time and experience, Dr. Nichter realized the potential to help more people by forming his own non-profit organization. That decision launched the formation of *Plasticos Foundation*. In February 1998, Dr. Nichter, Dr. Robert Burns, Ruthann Burns and Tim Glassett had the first *Plasticos Foundation* meeting. Their passion and perseverance have inspired other volunteers from around the country to donate, time, money and equipment toward the shared goal of changing the lives of children in need.

## Ecuadorian Amazon— November 2002

When Dr. Nichter arrived in Macas, Ecuador he was the first plastic surgeon to ever operate in this region of the Ecuadorian Amazon. Macas services five provinces including remote jungle areas where the indigenous Shuar and Achuar live. Upon arrival in Macas the *Plasticos* team was met by hundreds of patients and their families. Many of these people had traveled for days by foot, boat, bush plane and bus to be seen by our doctors. On our first day we screened 67 patients. Our team worked closely with the local surgeons, anesthesiologists and nurses to train

them in surgical techniques that can be used after our team leaves. Angel Tenesaca, M.D., a general surgeon who worked closely with our team, made the following comment, "Not only are we learning the latest in plastic surgical techniques but we're also learning how to work as a team."

At the end of the trip we had performed 60 surgeries in five days. A year's worth of surgery in this hospital. A couple of patients especially pulled the heartstrings of our team members. Dr. Nichter was able to repair a

complete cleft palate on Angela, a two years old. Angela's mother was particularly moved because after surgery, while still in recovery, she was able to say, "Mama" for the first time. Three members of the Washicta family came to us with cleft lips or palates but only one was healthy enough for surgery.



We were only able to operate on six-month old Roland. His cousins, Etza and Nanta, were too sick or malnourished for surgery. We have referred them for treatment so that their improved health on our next trip will allow correction of their deformities.



Jose was born with a wide cleft lip and palate as well as deformities of his ears. This operation is usually performed in the first three months of life. Jose was already four years old when we met him.

## Maracanau, Brazil— March 2003 Dedicated to the memory of Carol A. Bryant, MD

It took the *Plasticos* team 30 hours in planes and buses to get to the Municipal Hospital of Maracanau in northeastern Brazil. Rising at 6:00am, attempting to stay dry in the constant rain and living with no hot water, the sleep deprived yet highly motivated, team of 13 performed 55 complex surgeries during their stay.

In the jungle regions of northern Brazil, plastic surgery is not usually an option. "Hundreds of children with birth defects go through life facing stigmas, being estranged from society and sometimes being beaten up at school." The first day in Maracanau

more than 200 people were waiting to be seen by the *Plasticos* doctors. One mother and daughter wore clean scouting uniforms to show they were good people who deserved medical attention. The patients were primarily children with cleft lips/palates, burn contractures and traumatic injuries. Northeastern Brazil is one of the poorest regions in the country. The *Plasticos* team will return to this area again where the need appears endless. This trip was

partially funded by the Reconstructive Surgery Foundation.



Humberto

Humberto sustained severe burns over his scalp and other parts of his body. This operation transformed his face and scalp to an appearance that would be less likely to attract stares and social stigma.



**The Brazil trip was partially funded by the Reconstructive Surgery Foundation and would not have been possible without the generous donations made by the following:**

- Russell Leatherby
- Dr. Ross Nathan
- Kay & Leslie Furst
- Diana Lee Bixler
- Croul Family Foundation
- Downey Hospital Medical Staff
- Marina Medical Billing Service, Inc.

## Return to the Amazon: Summer 2003

Transportation is one of the major stumbling blocks for providing medical care in the remote areas of Ecuador. On our trip to Macas in November 2002 we were unable to service the inhabitants of several remote villages that are accessible only by bush plane. We investigated this situation by chartering a plane and flying to Tukupi, a village deep in the Amazon, near the Peruvian border. We were able to meet and interview the village elder and start the process for returning in August 2003. The hospital in Macas and the missionaries in this

remote area have arranged transportation for some of our doctors to fly in, screen patients and then transport selected patients to Macas for surgery. We will also be donating an ultrasound machine for local use. Health care is so poor in these regions that almost 100% of the population has malaria once a year. Four people out of the 30 families living in Tukupi died of Hepatitis B complications last year.



Excited children surround medical volunteers on a landing strip in the deep Amazon.

- Your generous donations will help make this and future trips possible.

### Sponsor a Child

\$700 will cover the full cost of changing a child's life. We can select a specific child and provide the sponsor with a photograph and brief bio of the child after the trip. In that way, the donor can see exactly where their



Homero

donation went. It is possible to take photographs of sponsoring donors and give the child their photograph. In that way, the child and their family have a name and face of a person or family who changed their lives.

"When I saw Homero's picture it brought tears to my eyes and a lump in my throat to know that a small portion of my abundance had so profoundly changed the life of a little boy who was in such great need of my help. To see Homero's before and after pictures gave me a warm sense of satisfaction knowing how I had helped to make a powerful life changing difference; that along with this dedicated team of incredibly talented and gracious doctors, we had done something very special. It is with great confidence that I will be continuing to contribute to Plasticos and their outreach to the Latin American people."

Regina Jacobson

### Beyond Surgery



Dr. Nichter (left) & Dr. Jed Horowitz (right) donate a medical library to the Ojele Memorial Hospital in Kenya (OMH). Seen here with OMH representative.

### Donor Spotlight

The Laguna Beach Womenade recently met for a potluck dinner and collected \$2500 as a donation toward our upcoming Amazon mission, August 4-14, 2003. Thank you ladies!





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## How you can Help: Non profit Tax ID number 33-0831358

**95% of all donations go directly to medical miracles.** Less than 5% of donations go to administrative costs. All staff are volunteer.

Although monetary donations are critically needed, other forms of donations are also helpful such as:

- Frequent flyer miles
- Cars/ Boats
- Other assets such as appreciated securities.

## Special Thanks to the following Friends of Plasticos:

- Armstrong Medical
- Danny Asahi
- Elieen Asahi
- Diana Lee Bixler
- Dixie and Bob Brain
- Dr. Gary Brody
- Dr. Bob & Ruthann Burns
- Cardinal Medical Specialties
- Croul Family Foundation
- Denise Cucurny
- Downey Hospital Medical Staff
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