

Hope on the Move...to the Philippines

Through circumstances similar to the once popular notion, “*Six degrees of separation from Kevan Bacon*” (see Wikipedia for a full explanation if the notion is curious to you); Bob Tebow had a friend, who knew a friend (a dentist), who had a daughter, who had a friend, who knew a Hope on the Move (HOM) Director (Mark Atkinson), who knew the dentist, who put him in contact with a friend, who contacted Bob Tebow, whose grandson half-way around the world needed urgent medical information. Through this providential introduction, HOM was eventually asked by the Bob Tebow Evangelistic Association (BTEA) to provide Medical and Dental Clinics to the people of the Philippines. It would be the first medical team to partner with the BTEA since 1996.

Few in Western Society know much about this country so far away. The Philippines, a country comprised of over 7,100 islands, has historically been an area of abuse and conquest. Despite obvious difficulties in ministry there (e.g., logistics, disease, poverty, safety, etc.), the BTEA has made it their goal to minister to EVERY Filipino. This year, a team of 102 Americans (including 11 from HOM) and 50 nationals was formed. On July 3rd, our team (Left to Right: Tom Benton, Alyssa Dragstedt, Steven Jones, George



Shipp, Bob Tebow, Heather Atkinson, Melanie Atkinson, Carol Atkinson, Mark Atkinson, Hannah Rogers, Howard Rogers, and Phil Atkinson) departed on a 44 hour trip, where they eventually served many days for 10-12 working hours.

Our Medical and Dental team

Recounting each of the lessons for the trip in this article would be, in a word, impossible. There are, however, a few points that are worthy of notation. Alongside of laughter were times for shedding tears. For each time of sharing news of good health with individuals, there were others when the news of a terminal prognosis was (unfortunately) shared. The word “miracle” is often overused, however, we saw true miracles in terms of the quantity and quality of the pharmaceuticals and medical/dental instruments available. In addition, the approximate number of people seen (>1800 medical exams and 400 dental extractions), we believe, exceeded all past efforts lead by this team of leaders by a factor of two!

To be clear, this would not have been possible without at least three things. First was the support (both prayers and financial giving) from our friends, family, and mission partners back home. Second, was the BTEA support team (photo below). They were our partners in every way. Their servant attitudes and willingness to work together as a team remains indescribable. Finally, there was Bob Tebow. If one wonders where the motivation for his (now) famous football son arrives from, one only needs to spend a few hours with Bob. He is amongst the most dedicated, focused, and caring individuals

many team members had encountered in their lives. Clearly, he is a man on a mission and we were honored to have been a part of that mission. Again, capturing the thoughts and reflections of each team member into this summary would be difficult. We encourage you to seek out a team member and ask them, directly.



The BTEA Medical/Dental Support Team

That said, the BTEA did have the team members write short summaries of one face-to-face encounter, some of which have been re-printed, below.

Carol Atkinson: We met a man who came for a tooth extraction. While waiting for the anesthetic to numb his mouth, I was delighted to discover that he spoke fluent English. He shared that he had been praying for God to provide a way for him to have dental work completed. Soon, he learned of the medical team coming to town. We shared together what a joy it is to serve a God who cares so much for our needs. While he was apprehensive about the procedure, he was excited to experience relief from pain. In addition to the work on his teeth, we drained a swollen “pocket” in his jaw. Although the process was stressful, he kept pointing up and saying the “Jesus in him” could sustain him. He was so excited to see his reflection without a swollen face and was thankful.

Steven Jones: I saw an elderly man who smoked and complained of weight loss, shortness of breath, and a prolonged, bloody cough. His pleasant demeanor fell when I told him he needed a chest x-ray and evaluation because he likely has TB or lung cancer. Before hearing the diagnosis, he told me he is a Christian because he is president of his church’s mission board. We shared the gospel with him once more, and he realized for the first time that he needs Jesus. His despair vanished after putting his trust in Jesus. I watched his smiling face as he left the clinic.

Mark Atkinson: Her feet bore the scars of a rare, markedly disfiguring disease. That was only part of this sad woman’s life. She also had progressive Parkinson’s disease, an inability to swallow, and a near inability to walk. When she did enter our clinic, many in the crowd turned their heads away, as watching her was too painful. Her countenance showed that she lacked two key components in life – hope and a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Her physical condition was so advanced and beyond any medications we had. Meeting those two voids was the only prescription I could provide. An unexplainable trust came over her when we followed the example of our Lord in performing the powerful act of washing her feet. This was followed by the most impacting prescription that could be given. The gospel reached beyond her external, physical appearance and into her soul. She invited Jesus into her life. The tears of pain that brought her to the clinic turned to tears of joy.

Mark and Carol Atkinson