



The CORE

GOOD NEWS! Therapist wins award, does mission abroad

Hand therapist Sharon Dest with HealthSouth in Fairfield, Conn., was awarded the Vargas International Hand Therapist Teaching Award by the American Association for Hand Surgery this year. With that award she traveled to Guatemala for two weeks in August to treat patients and provide medical education to healthcare providers.

Dest was one of two hand therapists given the award, which is named for Dr. Miguel Vargas, a hand surgeon who practiced in Puerto Rico and was an international emissary for education. The traveling team for the mission consisted of all volunteer surgeons, nurses, therapists and volunteers.

Two days were spent in the city of Antigua visiting, sharing experiences and caring for the local people. The group then traveled to Guatemala City to host a two day, bilingual international meeting on the care of the injured hand and upper extremity. The day following the meeting, patients from around the country were evaluated to determine if hand surgery or therapy was needed.

From morning to night, a week was spent performing surgery and providing hand therapy for those patients. The training of local healthcare providers was also incorporated into the care of these patients.

"The people are just amazing," Dest said. "They would sit and wait for four hours if they needed someone to see them and never complain. They were just grateful to have access to medical care."

This was my first mission and it helps you realize how fortunate you are in

your own life. I have two very healthy children who have every opportunity in front of them and these children in Guatemala reach the fifth grade and look forward to working in the field. It just opens your eyes and your heart."

Dest has 24 years of experience as a therapist and has been



certified as a hand therapist for five years. She has done more than 100 hours of course work over the years. Additionally, she helped establish hand therapy programs in Fairfield, Conn. and Manhattan.

A committee chaired by Lynn Bassini, president of Empire State Occupational Therapy, P.C. managed by HealthSouth and senior affiliate director of the American Association for Hand Surgery, selected the winners. Bassini, also a prior Vargas winner, chose the location for this humanitarian mission.

"Having spent 18 years of my life in Guatemala City, I was driven to return and contribute something to those in great need and unable to receive and pay for care," she said. "I also wanted to help medical professionals interested in furthering their knowledge of hand surgery and therapy."

As a result of this trip, Bassini has established the Guatemala Healing Hands Foundation, for which Dest is on the board of directors. This foundation will lead educational and medical missions to Guatemala on a regular basis.

For more information about the Guatemala Healing Hands Foundation, contact Bassini by calling 718-435-3122.

Winners!
Angela Hagerty, ATC, Dr. Guttentag and Tampa marketer Summer Witkemper took photos with the Stanley Cup recently. Dr. Guttentag is the team physician for the Tampa Bay Lightning, the 2003 Stanley Cup Champions.

