



SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS, STELLA NIAGARA, NEW YORK

Chiapas Connection

Spring 2023

Clínica Familiar Lak Ña Clara YOU DID THIS!



It didn't seem at all possible and yet, to quote a phrase often attributed to St. Francis,

*"Start by doing what is necessary;
then do what is possible,
and suddenly you are doing the impossible."*

In early January, sisters in leadership from across the USA -- Jo-Anne Grabowski, Nancy Zelma, Deborah Lockwood, Maria Elena Martinez, and Sue Artone-Fricke, along with Graciela Martinez and Sen Nguyen -- visited the mission in Palenque, Chiapas. This was the first on-site visitation since before the pandemic and it proved to be a rich experience.

At the top of the agenda was a visit to Casa Magdalena, one of the residences of the Franciscan Sisters in Palenque. Unfortunately, it had recently been burglarized while the sisters were not at home. To ease their trauma and aid in keeping the home safe, the leadership team gathered to pray throughout the house and bless it using holy water and incense.

Next the sisters visited the sprawling five-acre campus, Casa Franciscana. The land supports fruit trees, a spring, composting, vegetable gardens and now, from rough terrain, the new Clinic comprised of the clinic-in-a-can pods. This overgrown plot of land had been the starting point of dreams. We shared these dreams with our friends, donors and volunteers, and together, we have made these dreams a reality!



Clinic Director, Leyda, provides a tour



Exam room (top), maternity care (bottom)



Go Where the Spirit is Sending You!



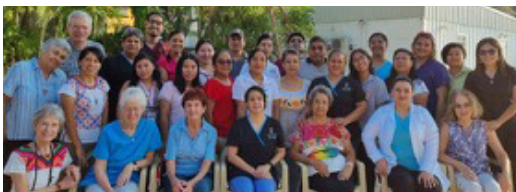
Some didn't feel it would ever happen and it certainly hasn't been an easy road; however, the Sisters of St. Francis held the faith of their foundress, Mother Magdalen Damen, who struggled yet persisted. "I did not accomplish anything, but let us continue trusting in God," Mother Magdalen said. "God urges me to do this work. God is so good, so very, very good. God will provide."

The Sisters give their gratitude to everyone who shared their vision to provide quality health care to the people of Palenque. Clínica Familiar Lak Ña Clara is, by any standard, very impressive!

Open five days per week, there are pods for x-rays and labs, maternal care and exam rooms. The old dispensary building is used as a pharmacy, patient intake and consultation space, dentistry and a residence for visiting healthcare professionals. On the property there are spaces for families to wait, lit walkways, parking, and greenhouses growing medicinal plants.

Leyda, the clinic's director, has a team of local health care professionals on staff tending to 25-30 patients/day. The surgical suite will be operational once repairs are completed. It sustained hurricane damage while in a Houston port, and further water damage by heavy rains in Palenque.

You might be wondering what this means for our annual medical mission of volunteers from the United States? Their help is still needed! In fact, a small team was sent in November 2022 -- the first since the COVID break-out. They collaborated with the clinic's staff and Palenque volunteers to treat 700 patients in five days!



November 2022. The medical mission volunteers are joined by the Sisters and clinic staff.

Dr. Peter Kowalski, who led the team from Western New York, said it was amazing to have x-ray and lab work available on-site thus eliminating the wait times for referrals. It's expected that future teams will work exclusively at the clinic since area transportation is now accessible from the outlying villages. Discussions are taking place to incorporate the clinic as part of residency training not only for Mexican doctors but also American. ... *Stay tuned!*

**From the bottom of our hearts,
thank you for walking with us on this amazing journey!**



Waiting area for families



Clinic grounds



Dental unit



S. Maria Elena and lab tech; portable x-ray unit

S. Nancy Zelma, Medical Mission Coordinator
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Barbara Johnson, Office of Advancement; Donations
716-754-2193 bjohnson@stellaosf.org

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