From Patricia Webster
President, Amazon Promise
November 2007

“To give essential medical care and attention that alleviates suffering, saves lives, and inspires hope in all concerned.” These are the words of our mission statement. These are the words that inspire us every day.

We see thousands of patients a year in our jungle and city clinics. This year alone, over 3,300 people have received medical care from Amazon Promise volunteers. As I write this, a British medical student team and two U.S. physicians are here with us working in poor neighborhoods in the city of Iquitos, and remote jungle villages on the Yarapa and Ucayali Rivers. By the year’s end, we will have treated at least 1,000 more people, nearly doubling the number of patients we normally see in a year. Are we exhausted? Yes! Are we inspired? Absolutely! Every volunteer who travels to Peru to work with Amazon Promise, and every donation we receive, is an inspiration, allowing us to continue our work, visit new villages, and expand our health services to thousands of poor and desperate people in those areas hardest to reach.

We’ve had an incredibly busy and productive year, with non-stop medical trips every month since July. This fall, we held our first one-week clinic trip in the city, and saw 560 patients in four long clinic days. What a hard-working, exceptional team! Lazos de Vida, a local HIV education organization, is now working with us in every clinic we hold in the city. Together with our own jungle HIV program, Soy Capaz, we are able to provide patients with education, condoms, testing, counseling and access to the Ministry of Health’s HIV program.

Construction plans for the Promesa de Belén Clinic are moving forward. The New York professional chapter of Engineers Without Borders (EWB), along with the student chapters from Brown and Binghamton Universities, are now working closely with the Peruvian Ministry of Health (MOH) to help Amazon Promise make this desperately needed clinic a reality. The latest clinic design can be found at ewbnybelenclinic.blogspot.com.

Based on MOH data, once Promesa de Belén opens its doors we expect to care for approximately 40% of the population of Belén, or approximately 30,000 people, not currently covered by their services, in addition to a significant number of people coming to Iquitos from the jungle looking for help.

In September, our volunteer medical team and Peruvian staff flew to Piura on the northern coast of Peru in response to repeated requests for medical attention from Aguaruna indigenous leaders. From there we traveled by bus six hours east into the desert, then boarded a Petro Peru helicopter for an hour’s ride into high mountainous jungle to hold clinics in very remote Aguaruna Indian villages of the upper Marañon River. This was a trip of firsts: it was our first time meeting the indigenous people of this region, and it was the first time most of these people had ever received medical attention. We were warmly greeted in every village with continued on page 2
traditional ceremony, speeches and dancing. Our faces were smeared with an orange plant dye called achiote to initiate our welcome into the villages. It was truly an unexpected surprise to be welcomed with such pomp!

The Aguaruna are very proud and colorful people with a history of aggression and territorial conflicts with other local tribes. The fighting continues to this day, but these clashes are more likely to be with squatters and illegal madereros (lumbermen) than other tribes. Large wooden spears used in previous confrontations are still prominently displayed in village huts and common areas. The Aguaruna are striving to maintain their traditional customs and culture. They paint their faces and wear feathered headdresses and jewelry, and are slowly starting to restore ancient ceremonial customs in an effort to strengthen their community and bring people closer together. While in the village of Napuruka, we witnessed a children’s Ayahuasca ceremony. The adults brought all the school-aged children into a ceremonial hut and presented them with twenty clay bowls from which to drink the boiled hallucinatory plant. They explained to us that these ceremonies are important in preparing the children to be spiritually and physically strong to protect their land.

Our clinics ran late into the evening. Nobody wanted to miss out on the chance to be seen by a doctor. There were times when the desperation in the air was palpable. Despite the challenges of translating three different languages to conduct history and physical examinations, we were able to see 775 people in five clinic days. When entering a new village, it often strikes me how the children are forced to fend for themselves in just about every way.
Unlike children in the U.S., these indigenous children take on adult responsibilities from a very early age. And not unlike villages where we work in the Corrientes and Pastaza regions, evidence of life in a remote and often harsh jungle climate is visible in every patient we see. Necrotic wounds, malaria, leishmaniasis, TB, malnutrition and diarrhea have all taken their toll. If a snake bite doesn’t kill, it will almost certainly leave a disfiguring disability. (Read further in this newsletter for a story about Ismael, one of our patients seen on the Aguaruna trip). With no health care resources at their disposal, these people suffer and die from potentially treatable diseases every day.

When we were leaving the village of Atahualpa after holding clinic, the people got together to thank us and make a few last departing speeches. During these speeches, a group of women remained off to one side huddled together. As we were heading to our boat, they came forward. One woman spoke up to say that although ordinarily women don’t have much say in the village, they wanted to speak today and tell us how much we are needed. They begged us not to let this be the only time we visit them. Her voice cracked with emotion as she spoke. It was a powerful experience for both AP team members and the Aguaruna. We hope to return in February, to continue strengthening our relationship and providing the best of medical care.

The realities of going into remote villages that have never received medical care are eye opening to say the least. But these expeditions allow us to make a comparison between villages that have and have not been receiving care. The differences are huge. We have made such an enormous impact on people’s lives in the villages we have been working in over the last 15 years. We now have the capacity to expand our health care delivery into new regions, alleviate suffering, save lives, and inspire hope. On behalf of Amazon Promise and the Peruvian people, thank you for another incredible year.
DONOR SPOTLIGHT: Leaving a Legacy

A former teacher in West Michigan, Jim Cronk first visited the Amazon in March of 1991. For Jim, as for so many others, the magical power of one short week in the rainforest of the Amazon was a life-impacting; life-directing experience. He returned in June of 1992 with 39 of his middle school students for an environmental education workshop—so students, after their own rainforest immersion, could be a part of its future by teaching and sharing its life-giving importance with us all.

Through his work with these students over the years, Jim met Patty Webster, Amazon Promise’s President, and her team of health professionals in the midst of the jungle at the Yacumama Lodge. This serendipitous meeting developed into a lasting friendship. In 2003, Jim visited the ‘the Venice of Iquitos’—the impoverished village of Belen. With a nurse, a doctor and a former veterinary assistant comprising part of the group, this four hour visit became one of the first coordinated clinic sessions for the people of Belen. Perhaps this was one of those early seeds planted; now being nourished, that will one day emerge as AP’s Belen Clinic—bringing much needed health care to this community of Iquitos’ most poor.

Most generously, Jim has recently named Amazon Promise, and specifically the Belen Clinic, as the beneficiary of his retirement trust upon his death. Jim writes, “If I had the resources now, I would fund this dream of Patty and Javier in a heart beat. I have been privileged to witness their work of passion and compassion—both in the remote jungle and in Iquitos. What they do is so selfless and I admire them for it. The people of Peru are in my heart. I have many friends there—particularly the always friendly, smiling and endearing street kids of Iquitos. So, though I cannot access the principal of my retirement funds in this life, I can decide the ‘who and how’ of their disbursement for...... well, down the road. Thus, Amazon Promise has been named as a benefactor in my Trust. For all who believe in the AP mission—I urge you to (in addition to gifts you can make now) to consider naming Amazon Promise for ...... well, down the road.”

On behalf of Amazon Promise and all the communities we serve, thank you, Jim, for such foresight and generosity.

For more information on how to get involved or establish your own legacy, please visit www.amazonpromise.org.

ALUMNI

We want to hear from you! We will be presenting a new section in future newsletters featuring updates from Amazon Promise alumni. Please send us information on where you are now, what you are doing, etc. Did you do a medical student rotation and are now a physician? How did your experience with Amazon Promise influence you? Please send your updates – along with any address and email changes – to kristina@amazonpromise.org.
Update on Ismael  

by Patty Webster

These are photos of a young indigenous man, Ismael Pape Jempeket, 19, who was brought into our clinic in a wheel barrow while we were in a very remote Aguarunas Indian village called Napuruka in September.

Ismael had been bitten on the left foot by a poisonous Bushmaster snake several months prior. His parents waited over three weeks to take him to the nearest medical post in Saramiriza for attention. He was told that his foot would have to be amputated. Frightened and not understanding the severity of their son’s situation (and not understanding Spanish), his parents took him back to the village without getting surgery, and that is where he had been until we arrived. He had been hidden away in his family’s hut since being bitten by the snake. As you can see from the photos, his leg below the knee had been slowly eroding away causing him incredible suffering and psychological trauma. He also had osteomyilits, a severe bone infection that could have eventually ended his life. It’s impossible to put ourselves in Ismael’s situation, but I can tell you that being in his presence that day you could feel his desperation and fear.

We attempted to have him taken out by helicopter, and when it did arrive to pick him up along with one other patient, the parents were still too frightened and wouldn’t let him go. After about a week, they did finally take him to Saramiriza where he was transferred to a larger town called Bagua. From there, he was taken to the capital city of Lima. Thanks to your generous donations, Amazon Promise, along with an indigenous rights organization called AIDESEP, have been able to care for him and see to it that Ismael receives the life-saving medical attention he needs, which includes surgery to amputate below the knee.

continued on page 6
Amazon Promise held the first One-Week trip on October 6 to 13, 2007.

By Jacqueline Carroll, Amazon Promise Board Member

What a fantastic week!! We had five new volunteers from the U.S. and Canada...

I began my week with one night of luxury at the Marriott Hotel in the Miraflores area of Lima, Peru, with an amazing ocean view hotel. Feather beds, chocolates on the pillow, and the fabulous breakfast buffet all impressed me. I met up with volunteer Lisa Swinyard there, and continued to warn her that Iquitos is nothing like Lima! While we were having lunch overlooking the Pacific, Lisa had the sudden urge to jump off a cliff. So we took a taxi from the Marriott and met up with Marco, the parachute guy on a cliff. Lisa and Marco jumped off the cliff and floated all around...on wind currents...over the ocean and near the hotels, and then landed safely back on the cliff right where they started. Fantastic.

Once the team arrived in Iquitos, we held clinics in Belen and Masusa - 2 days each. My favorite location was in Belen, where we worked in a hut right near our proposed clinic site! Actually, it was more like a condo. The family vacated their home for the day so we could work. Two huts were joined together by a wood plank, accessed by a trap door of sorts, and ladder. It was about 20 feet off the ground on stilts to accommodate high water season. Every time one of the big guys walked across the hut it swayed, and felt a little like a combination of boat and tree house. And then of course there were the pigs behind the hut in a pen squealing most of the day!

Each clinic day we were joined by 2 workers from Lazos de Vida, the HIV education/counseling group that works out of the Hospital Iquitos. The two women in charge were extremely professional and sweet. They did at least 2 group presentations each day in clinic with a flip chart for waiting patients, and were available for private counseling...
when we referred patients to their table (the many, many, many women with STDs that we treated). We had some rapid HIV tests still available, and we unfortunately discovered one or two HIV positive women each day. Once the Lazos women gave the counseling, they enrolled these patients in the hospital program for treatment. The Lazos de Vida employees are sponsored by Doctors Without Borders based in Lima, and each of the employees lives with HIV. They are a great example of how one can live one’s life if he/she follows the treatment. For me, it was a real honor to work with them and to see them in action.

STDs were rampant, and we may have set a record for the most Pelvic exams in 4 days straight (maybe Dr. Benita will change her specialty to GYN instead of Cardiology after this week?!), not to mention at least 2 young women (one was 28) with obvious cervical cancer, which reinforces the great need for the Gardisil Vaccine down there pronto. And of course Pap Smears.

Veda Wong Sing (PA from NYC) displayed her versatility, doing everything with ease from pelvics to draining abscesses, to putting IVs in babies. A 15 year-old boy presented with a huge abscess in his groin; Veda drained probably 200ccs of pus out of it, and she had to pack it and have him come to the house for more packing and cleaning for 2 more days while we were there. It was looking great by Friday.

We of course treated our usual share of scabies babies...and children...which our non-medical volunteer Lisa Swinyard approached with creativity and lots of energy. Dr. Bob from Michigan (a.k.a. “bobo”) and Jose Luis were setting records for the most patients seen in one day; they were quite the efficient team.

A nine month-old baby came in with her entire left hand burned; it had happened 24 hrs before, and the local hospital had treated her with gentian violet and some type of oil! Dr. Bruno, a Peruvian MD, agreed that was an antiquated treatment; Bruno and Lyndon worked hard to scrub the hand to remove the purple dye covering the burn. They slathered it with Silvadene and dressed it. It was heart wrenching to see her scream while they scrubbed, and the best we could do under the circumstances was to quickly run over with a syringe-full of Tylenol to squirt down her throat to possibly make a dent in the pain. You can never predict what patients will cause you to lose it, but for me this week, this was the one...

A very pregnant woman came in to clinic in Masusa in labor. Well, she was only 3cm dilated, and the hospital told her not to show up until she was 4cm. We were very worried that the MotorCar ride alone would cause the birth to happen en route, as we had a very bumpy and muddy commute there that day, with some volunteers needing to get out and push! My driver however was not to be deterred, and punched-it through through the 2 foot mud puddle, nearly tipping us over...but we made it! Dr. Alex called ahead to the hospital, and we gave her 10 soles for transportation. We heard 2 days later that labor stopped and she still had not given birth. Who could predict?

One evening on the walk back to the hotel after dinner, we stopped into INKA PHARMA to buy more mebendazole. INKA PHARMA was having an Inca Cola celebration with the INCA COLA GIRL there all dressed in her yellow spandex body suit, and the Inca Pharma mascot was putting a boa constrictor around the customers’ necks to pose for photos.
Oh yes, and free Inca Cola all around...they even have Inca Light now! According to Lyndon (RN from Canada), it complements the turtle stew at Fitzcarraldo quite nicely.

There was also at least one case of Dengue Fever. According to Dr. Alex, there was an emergency Dengue alert happening in Masusa that week. The government was apparently treating all standing water in the Masusa area with some chemical to kill the mosquito.

We took a trip up the Nanay River on our day off to Pilpintuasi, the butterfly farm and animal rescue place. After getting stuck on a sandbar in the river, it was a scorching 20 minute walk in low water, but worth it. All of the wild animals there have been rescued. They have a Jaguar, Tapir, monkeys, and a giant anteater with an 8 inch tongue that you can pet. The guide showed us the butterfly from larvae, to cocoon (which was pulsating in his hand!), to hatching the butterfly. Amazing. The Blue Morphos were flying all around us!

At the end of the week I had the privilege of meeting with three men from the Peruvian Ministry of Health to discuss the progress on the plans for the Belen Clinic. It was very exciting to be part of the discussion...and we are making progress!

It was a wonderful week all around and a true pleasure to work with such a professional and caring team of volunteers...I hope to see you all next time in the jungle!
2007 Donors continued from page 8

Alice Forman
Joseph Forman
Lee Frankel-Goldwater
Shelley Fulton
Mitchell and Laurie Gage
Paul and Kathy Gallagher
Geriatric NPs at Seattle, Group Health
Jewel Gibson
Edward and Marlene Glac
Mark and Susan Goodreau
Richard Gordet and Sonja Johansson
Katie Gregory
Janet Grimwade
Donald Grossman and Elaine Hirsch
Annelys Guisasola and Eino Jacobs
Beverly Hatcher
Tomas Havrda and Laurel Ruzicka, M.D.
Tom and Angela Head
Richard Henrikson
Pablo Monge Hidalgo
Suzanne Howard-Carter
Bob Hyzy, M.D.
Dave Hyzy
Bradley James and Martha Gage Rock
Judith Jensen
Douglas Johnston, DO
Ursula Kaprielian
Irina Karnaugh
Douglas Keehn, M.D.
Chris Kellner
Randell Kirsch
Brenda Lazarus
Greg Leach, M.D. and Sally Leach
Heidi Lehto
James Leonard
Walter Levi and Elsi Haugen
Mark London
Cheryle Long
Jessica Long
Andrew Lustig, N.D.
Ann Macpherson
Magdalen Miller
Jill Milton
Abigail Mithoefer
Jerry Morks
Richard and Georgia Murray
RF and ML Nelson
Margaret O’Connor
David and Teresa Ordl
Mayra Padilla
Doug Parent
S.C. Parks
Bryn Patton
Daniel Pratt, M.D. and Susie Pratt
Ann Prestipino
Peter and Marie Rakov
Carole and Joseph Ramirez
Caroline and Victor Ramirez
David and Cheryle Ramirez
Joseph and Loretta Ramirez
Lynn Ramirez and Steve Nelson
Terry and Denis Ramirez
Natalie Rasmussen
Carol and Steve Rebscher
Rochelle Rock
Melonie Rockwell
Misael Rodriguez and Bruce Kaye
Richard Rohrer, M.D. and Jill Stein, M.D.
Matthew Rosen, M.D.
Dale and Barbara Rothe
Barbara G. Sahagan
Robert Schapiro, M.D. and Anne Schapiro
Thomas and Tania Schlatter
Mark and Gail Schlenker
Ronald and Melanie Schlottmann
Henry Showell
Kristina Server
Shirley Sherman
Alan and Phyllis Silver
Art Silver, M.D.
Mark L. Smith, M.D.
Craig Snelgrove
Cem Soykan, M.D. and Rhonda Gill
CJ and EC Stamates
Amy Stein
David and Patricia Stevens
Raymond Sullivan
Daniel Susott, M.D.
Jack W. Swanberg
Fred Swanson
Lisa and Dennis Swinyard
Jonathan Taylor
Jennifer Thelen
Lloyd and Amalia Trower
Andrew Warshaw, M.D. and Brenda Warshaw
Leslie Warshaw
Margaret Webster
Patty Webster
Jonathan Weinstock and Laura Kogelman
Susan Woodward
Adrienne Zazzi, M.D.

Organizations:
Albert Einstein College of Medicine Global Health Club
Amgen Foundation
David and Dorothy Bonnett Foundation
Engineers Without Borders
Face It Salon
The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Goulston & Storrs
Limon Restaurant
Perspectives International
Swanson Automotive, Inc.
United Way of Thurston County
Victoria of Circle of Yarns
Yale University Physician Associate Program

see 2007 Promise Expedition Volunteers on page 10
Support Amazon Promise!

Amazon Promise relies on private support to fund current operations, expand its services, and provide a wider range of care to urban and rural communities in Peru. If you would like to make a gift, please mail your check or money order to: P.O. Box 1304, Newburyport, MA, 01950. Or, click here to give via PayPal. Thank you for your support!
Amazon Promise is a U.S. non-profit organization, exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Under state law, which will vary from state to state, and federal law, which may change annually, a large portion, if not all of your trip is tax deductible in the United States. Likewise, monetary donations made in the U.S. are tax deductible.