During the holiday season I can’t help but think about children like this little girl, suffering with malaria, who struggle each day just to stay alive.

From the desk of Patty Webster

In October of this year, I had the incredible honor of receiving a Caring Award from the Caring Institute in Washington, D.C. It was a privilege and I was truly humbled to be in the presence of past and present honorees who have done so much to make our world a better place.

The award was meaningful to me in many ways, namely reinforcing the work that Amazon Promise does, and our belief that if people have access to basic medical care and health education, they can go on to lead full, productive lives. It just makes sense. When you are healthy you can study, work, tend the fields, and provide for yourself and your family. The AP US and Peru staff has been together a long time. Some of us have worked together for 24 years. I’m so proud to be part of such a wonderful family!

No one beats the drum for basic health care. It doesn’t draw the attention that other health-related issues do, yet more people, especially children, die from a lack of basic health care than from anything else. When I hear people question whether providing basic medical care and health education to people really does any good, I have to admit that after 20 years, I get a little annoyed. You aren’t going to change the world in one day’s clinic handing out vitamins and pain medication, but if you stick with that village, you will see results and how your efforts have made a world of difference from when you first started.

We started Amazon Promise (then Rainforest Health Project) in 1993 with the goal of reaching the unreachable, to provide desperately needed medical and dental care, and health education to those left out and forgotten by society and the system. Whether we’re trying to reach a remote indigenous village of 30 or 300, or a much larger impoverished neighborhood outside the city of Iquitos, our dedicated volunteer medical teams will do whatever is necessary to get there. What’s different about working in the Amazon is that the only way to get anywhere is by water. There are no roads so we travel by foot, wooden boat, and dugout canoe. On any given expedition we may get dropped off by helicopter or cross a river by raft. We’ve even hitched a ride on an oil barge! That’s no easy job when you’re also hauling 50 containers of supplies.
One of the biggest lessons we’ve learned is that showing up, and showing we care, can bring nearly as much comfort as the medical relief our teams provide. **Showing we care...** it carries a lot of power and hope for millions of people living with disease and extreme poverty around the world.

For the past 20 years, Amazon Promise has brought healthcare to people in 75 remote villages and many impoverished neighborhoods in and around Iquitos. We’ve delivered babies and have watched them grow up and start their own families. It’s incredible to think about! Many of our volunteers have returned to work with us time and again, eventually bringing their own children to volunteer. Several of these ‘children’ have been so inspired by their experience, they’ve gone on to become health professionals as well!

**In 2010,** we built the **Belen Clinic** in the sprawling river community of 74,000 people living in extreme poverty. Working with the group Toilets For People, we hope to expand our work in Belen by installing low-cost composting toilets in 2014. The Belen Clinic has also become a place where other organizations work and local government projects are carried out.

**¡Soy Capaz! is Amazon Promise's HIV-prevention, education, and patient care program started in 2006 by AP Educational Director, Elena Deem, PhD.** While we maintain our focus on HIV and STDs, we have begun to address related issues through a new program called ‘Healthy Lifestyles’, including individual and reproductive rights, and environmental protection. These areas are a natural extension of our years of field experience and research. Our goal is to generate an up-to-date, holistic educational program tailored to the current necessities of the local Amazonian communities.

- We provide treated mosquito nets to combat malaria
- We now have a portable ultrasound and lab that has significantly increased the level of care we are able to provide
- To confront the growing rates of cervical cancer in the areas we work in, we have created a **“Women’s Well-Being”** educational program to provide cervical cancer prevention and intervention. Within the next year, we will have the necessary equipment to perform both colposcopy and cryotherapy in the field.
- **Our medical, nursing and dental student internships,** not only allow us to reach thousands more people in need each year, but these students go on to work as professionals all over the world spreading the message of caring to others.

All of these programs, and others, are created and carried out by volunteers who see the need and the ability to make a difference. Our volunteers and staff are the backbone of our organization, and our office in Iquitos is open throughout the year to receive patients needing help. I am driven every day by the belief that every life is important and that every being has the right to health and happiness. Seeing a person being carried into one of our clinics, and walking out after receiving good treatment, is like no other feeling in the world.

*Patty*
Alumni Corner
In July I had the honor and privilege of moving to Level Three of this cosmology with Amazon Promise. In 2010, on my first adventure with AP, I was very much at the “See One” level when Patty led our group into the Pacaya Samiria National Reserve. It was a very memorable trip, but all of my compatriots were accomplished nurses, nurse-practitioners, dentists, and doctors, and there was much more for me to see and learn than to teach. In 2011, on a remarkably improvised trip to the high jungle, there were a pair of British med students in the mix (Nate, Richard: that means you!) and I got to dip my toes into global health education. This was the “Do One” level for me. I had the good fortune to work alongside Monica Rabanal, a lively and experienced family medicine NP, and Chuck Morrison, MD, the consummate family physician. They taught me so much about primary care on the frontier. A couple of trips to Central America with students from my medical school (Tufts) ensued, and then came the email from Patty, “Rick, how would you like to precept on the July 2013 trip?” What can I say. I felt ready, but joining us would be 2 senior British medical students, 4 junior American medical students, 2 physician assistant students, 2 NP students, and 2 MPH students. Yikes. There were a half-dozen other experienced practitioners along, including the inimitable Bob Fulton, DMD, but still, this was a sizeable and heterogeneous group to be responsible for. It wasn’t “Teach One”, it was “Teach Twelve”! In the jungle! In hindsight, I needn’t have worried. Patty & Co. managed the unmanageable once again, equally in the poor neighborhoods in Iquitos and in the jungle towns near the Yarapa River, so that all of the paraphernalia was there when we needed it. Bob Hyzy, the medical director of Amazon Promise, generously shared his didactic material. And there was that almost magical factor of the “selection bias” of those who sign on to AP expeditions: to a person, they are 1) adventurous, 2) open, and 3) want to do something good for the world. Could there be a better crowd to precept?

The education and oversight process basically unfolded in three ways. First, there were some didactics. These have now gone beyond simple printed lists of medications, etc, to include Powerpoint presentations from Patty’s battered but worthy laptop. A lightweight, rechargeable pico projector and portable screen make presentations possible even in remote areas. Bob Fulton and I gave some of them to start off but then, building upon the peer-to-peer University of Michigan model, several students also gave talks. It was really quite a lot of fun.

Secondly, there were the clinics. A scheme of rotations was established, whereby the trainees worked with the various docs or NP’s at their medical stations. We were fortunate to have 2 well-trained and friendly Peruvian MD’s with us at all times, and later Dr. Steve Winter from Connecticut as well, so that the faculty-to-trainee ratio was great. The dialogues at the stations commonly went beyond the usual nuts and bolts of diagnosis & treatment to dwell upon issues of context: “Well, back in Boston we’d treat it this way, but here in the selva in Peru …”. For example, a 70 year-old man with bladder outlet obstruction is handled differently when he’s 3
hours by boat from the nearest government health post and it’s 2 hours beyond that to Iquitos, population 370,000 … and served by one, count ‘em, just ONE, urologist! Coping with these problems is thought-provoking for preceptor and preceptee alike. Finally, and maybe most importantly, there were the ad hoc conversations. These could occur anywhere: hanging out at AP house in Iquitos, over meals, on the river en route to some destination, and at a myriad of points inbetween. These conversations rarely remained in the medical domain. Rather, a patient seen earlier in the day might lead to a clang association with, say, some movie that someone saw 10 years ago, thence to some actor or pop figure, followed by some social or environmental issue, which in turn had a way of circling back to the present – the river, the jungle, the villages, the life – and a more profound feeling for the context in which we were working. In these moments the preceptor’s job is easy: you can’t improve upon the experience, so you just get out of the way. At the end of the day, being a preceptor on an Amazon Promise expedition is a fabulous opportunity. Are you concerned and maybe feeling a little helpless about the human and enviro problems of our day? Well, I have a tonic for you: roll up your sleeves and get involved with a group like Amazon Promise. The concrete realities of life on and near The River will jolt you out of your funk. Two or three weeks away from “the grind”, whatever that may mean for you, will do you good. And the contact high of travelling with and teaching the Millennial Generation – who, let’s face it, will bear the brunt of saving the planet – is truly priceless.

Richard Rohrer is the Chief of Transplant Surgery at Tufts Medical Center and Professor of Surgery at Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston, Massachusetts. He is a 3-time AP volunteer!

To see more photos from the July/August medical trip go to: [http://share.shutterfly.com/action/welcome?sid=0AbOHLjI2btmlHdg](http://share.shutterfly.com/action/welcome?sid=0AbOHLjI2btmlHdg)

We are excited to welcome Associate Medical Director, Dr. Eva Clark to the Amazon Promise Team! Eva has been an avid supporter of Amazon Promise since her first trip in 2006, when she traveled with AP as a medical student. She received her PhD in Microbiology from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 2010 after participating in a malaria immunology study conducted in several villages outside Iquitos. She received her MD, also from UAB, in 2013.
Cervical Cancer Prevention
Dr. Eva Clark, AP Associate Medical Director

Imagine a world in which a few simple actions could prevent hundreds of cancer deaths. No need to invest millions of dollars into expensive drug regimens or sophisticated DNA technology. No need to build gargantuan diagnostic and treatment centers, or homes for families to stay in while loved ones are undergoing surgery and chemotherapy. That world is the Peruvian Amazon.

As with all Amazon Promise trips, the February 2013 expedition to villages on the Yarapa, lower Ucayali, and lower Maranon rivers was life-changing. This was my third trip with Amazon Promise, and I was excited to see how much the organization and the area had changed since my last visit. It was encouraging to find that AP was now traveling with a mobile laboratory, and that many of the villages boasted improvements—for instance, one proudly showed us their brand-new water system. However, we also saw first-hand both old and new challenges that people living in this region are currently facing. Many of the villages we visited were battling the river, which was overflowing its banks after months of excessive rainfall. In Libertad we canoed to the steps of the school building, a path that had been walkable a year before. There, our AP team used up the majority of anti-fungal cream we had brought for treating superficial fungal infections commonly encountered in this constantly inundated setting.

Also in Libertad, I had a simple but eye-opening experience that I doubt I will ever forget. At the end of the clinic day a patient approached me and asked if we could do a pelvic exam and Pap smear for her. As I responded to her, explaining that we didn’t have the necessary materials to do Pap smears, it struck me that this woman shouldn’t know what a Pap smear was, considering her impoverished surroundings and poor access to healthcare. But she did.

How many women with end-stage cervical cancer can you remember seeing in one week? Any number would be large, but, sadly, it’s an all-too common patient presentation when doing clinics in and around Iquitos, Peru. Despite the world-wide push for early cervical cancer screening for the past several decades, this campaign has barely infiltrated the Amazon Promise catchment area. For years AP medical volunteers have been frustrated by the lack of options available to treat these women—especially when their cancer could have been prevented with a cheap and simple screening program.

The logistical, political, and financial challenges presented when attempting to open access to healthcare to Amazonian Peruvians have always been great. This year, AP is making a new promise to this population: to implement a cervical cancer education, prevention, and action campaign.
The first step was to create educational materials. AP Director of Education, Elena Deem, PhD, and University of Florida student Jessica Jefferson, have already put together a women’s health education campaign that will complement the “Soy Capaz!” HIV education program already being performed on AP trips. In July 2013, AP successfully began this campaign by holding educational workshops about cervical cancer prevention in both the Belen clinic and in the villages visited during that trip. We found that many women knew about cervical cancer, although they were at a loss for the means to prevent it.

The next step will be to proceed with not only Pap smears, but another technique called Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid together with cryotherapy (VIA/CT), which will allow us to test and treat women with suspicious cervical dysplasia on the very same day. Other aspects of the project will include colposcopy (with a machine donated by Joyce Mancini, NP), STD screenings, and HPV vaccination. The initial funds for this project have been generously donated by the nurses of Magnet Charity Fund, which is based out of Winchester Hospital, in Winchester, MA.

Another great surge forward for the campaign was recruiting Alana Valles, daughter of our principal interpreter and head guide Jose (Joe Luis) Valles. Alana is a young obstetrician, who is excited about using her passion for women’s health to lead the cervical cancer prevention teaching sessions. Dr. Deem has taught Alana her interactive teaching methodologies, and thus she is qualified to effectively inform women about cervical cancer prevention. From this beginning she will help prepare women in the AP communities for implementation of the practical portion of our cervical cancer prevention project. She is trained in performing pelvic exams and traditional Pap smears.

Although both Pap smears and VIA are inexpensive and highly effective if implemented correctly, AP still lacks most of the funds to purchase the supplies needed to put these plans into motion. What kind of costs are we talking about? A Cryotherapy Machine = $1400 Enough glass slides for 100 women = $7.54. Speculums to perform pelvic exams for 100 women = $134.62. One liter of vinegar for VIA staining = $2.08. A hysterectomy = approximately $350. The cost benefit analysis of this project is a no-brainer.
As always, all of these exciting activities will depend on the fundraising, logistical challenges, scientific considerations, and, to some extent, the cooperation of Peru’s Health Department (in the case of HPV vaccinations). However, we’re confident that this project will be a success thanks to the strong support and determination of the Amazon Promise community.

Not One, But Two!

Lara Andi Ahuanari is a 17 year old woman from the Achual village of Jerusalen on the Tahuayo River. Jerusalen is about a half an hour hike into the forest from the Yarapa River. Lara is the granddaughter of our good friend and co-worker, Ramon Cumpana Ahuanari, traditional healer and founder of the village. Lara Andi came into clinic this past February for a pre-natal check. This was her first pregnancy. At the time she was about 8 months pregnant and had never had a pre-natal exam. Our Peruvian physician Dr. Miguel Pinedo performed a bedside ultrasound examination and determined that both Lara and her baby were at high risk and needed to travel to Iquitos immediately for a Cesarean section. This was a shock to both Lara and her mother who accompanied her to the exam. Dr. Pinedo showed the ultrasound images to them, and explained that the baby appeared to be in an abnormal position, and if this did not change by the time Lara was ready to give birth, both she and baby could be in great danger. In the jungle, people are accustomed to calling on a ‘sobadora’ to manipulate the baby into position. Dr. Pinedo told Lara and her mother this would be very risky and that if anything went wrong, there would be no one in the village to help them. He urged them to head straight to Iquitos where AP would continue to assist them at the hospital. It was the best and safest recourse.
We continued on with our clinics and upon arrival into Iquitos a week or so later, we learned that Lara and her parents had traveled to Iquitos as we recommended and a Cesarean section performed immediately. Lara was now the proud mother of not one but two little boys! Needless to say, we all breathed a sigh of relief. However, we also learned that Lara was not out of the woods. She had lost a lot of blood during the procedure, had a hemoglobin of 5, and was prohibited from breastfeeding until she stabilized! The family had been unsuccessful in finding a blood donor, and had no funds to purchase a $20 can of Enfamil to feed the babies. In Iquitos, as in many hospitals in low resource settings, the hospital will only provide blood if you have someone to replace what is used. It’s always difficult to understand this policy when a mother and her two healthy babies are at risk.

In the end, three blood donors were found (tourists), and we were able to purchase enough Enfamil to sustain the boys until their mother could begin breastfeeding again. I am happy to report that Lara and the babies are all doing well!

**A Medical Rotation in Compassion**

*By Daniel A. Wood PA-SIII*

I am writing this after literally just finishing clinical rotations in my Physician Associate education. What better time to think back and sift through the past two and half years?

When deciding where to pursue my education, one big draw to Yale was the opportunity to participate in international rotations. Amazon Promise was an attractive option, lived up to the expectations, and will be remembered as one of the most memorable learning experiences of my lifetime. This is a little insight into that experience.

Peru was the light at the end of the tunnel for me. I had most of my mandatory rotations out of the way, had drug my feet through writing a thesis, and was now set to enjoy my electives. This goal was matched with uncertainty. To this point, most of the rotations were in the New Haven, CT area with familiar people, places, and electronic medical records. Peru and everything encompassing this rotation was meant to enhance the ability to work with different practitioners, different languages,
limited resources, and overcome the many obstacles to help as many patients as possible while simultaneously learning. These goals were matched, but my lasting impression was from a different source.

After a couple days of traveling, introductions and redeeming lost luggage, it was time for our first day in clinic. Enveloped in new smells and sounds, the brigade of motos sped through Iquitos, eventually leaving us at the Belen clinic. I was teamed up with Dr. Diana with Selvy as our translator. From the beginning, I was taken aback by the difference in the approach and the treatment style by the Peruvian doctor. That can quickly be adapted. What stood out was the physician’s ability to truly care about each of the twenty to thirty patients treated that day. She took time to genuinely listen and delve through all the information to decide what was each patients’ motive for seeking care and how could we best help them. That day we saw everything from malnutrition and parasites to previously undiagnosed suspected stage III-IV lymphoma. At the end of the day, retiring to the air-conditioned haven, known as the Hotel Europa, it wasn’t the lists of diagnoses and sheer number of patients that I reflected. It was the doctor’s compassion. Surprisingly, this compassion didn’t stop there. Day by day, I rotated with the American doctors, other Peruvian doctors, and other American practitioners only to find the same level of altruism. I found it astonishing that this surprised me. If the truth be told, while they do try to incorporate compassion and empathy into our education, the examples while on clinical rotations are scarce. That reiterates the importance of rotations like Amazon Promise for medical students. Surrounding yourself in this addictive empathy is the best way to develop it as a personal style.

While in Peru, I gained a better sense of respect for patients, co-workers, animals, and myself. To work with a team that would go out of their way time and time again to help even one person touched my heart. In my opinion, and most would agree this starts with Patty and is the basis of the organization. I could write all day on examples of Patty going out of her way to help families and individuals not only medically, but also with social issues. It is only fitting that she recently received a national Caring award. It is extremely evident in her organization and the people involved.

**Funny Story**

On our third or fourth clinic day, Rosa was my translator. I was going through my normal exams on each patient. After each section of the physical exam, I would repeat “mucho gusto” thinking it meant “very good”. Laughing, Rosa let this continue for a little while before informing me that it meant “nice to meet you”. The patients were probably thinking, “This American is REALLY happy to meet us”. Spanish continues to be a weakness and is a goal to improve before my next trip.

**Unforgettable**

This trip will always be treasured and has helped mold me as a person. Two experiences stand out and I will never forget. The first was a children’s Independence Day parade in the jungle. Each child had made a homemade lantern. The kids were so proud of their
work as they marched through the town with pride. It was a breathtakingly beautiful display. The second memory was a clinic added at the end of trip for my classmate, Ivan and I to meet our schools requirements. We travelled to an orphanage for HIV positive children. Some of the children were orphans while other had family in the area but could not provide the appropriate care for this specific population. During one of the biggest rainstorms of the trip, we one by one saw the small group of children and the staff members. These kids were my last unforgettable patients in Peru!

Looking Back – 1997 Cholera in the Amazon!

A woman with a double IV lies on a school desk in the village of Puerto Miguel. Many people would be carried into clinic that day dying from Cholera.

The Outcome - People that were carried into clinic wrapped in hammocks, moaning in pain or unconscious, walked out at the end of the day after receiving lifesaving IV treatment. This same day one of our volunteers suffered a massive heart attack and had to be carried thru the jungle, put in a speedboat back to Iquitos, then flown back to the US via a Medex Medevac jet!

Throughout the year we act as patient advocates for many of the people we see in clinic or those that have traveled for days to arrive at our doorstep in Iquitos in need of hospital care. Being turned away at the ER and denied urgent care for lack of a government issued ID, or DNI, is unconscionable. Yet it’s a very concerning and growing issue. To get a DNI you must have a birth certificate. In many cases, people who are born in remote jungle villages have never been registered. Frequently, a birth certificate is not even enough, and those seeking treatment are turned away for lack of a witness to vouch for their identity. Thankfully, we work with local doctors, and DEMUNA, the child protection agency in Iquitos, who are willing to take the extra steps to ensure people with urgent medical conditions receive the lifesaving care they need. Amazon Promise Administrative Coordinator in Peru, Rosa Aranzabal is also there to bring them to the hospital and has become a strong voice on their behalf.

ACTIVITIES IN IQUITOS BEFORE AND AFTER MEDICAL CAMPAIGNS

Rosa Aranzabal
Amazon Promise Administrative Coordinator

Amazon Promise is actively working during the entire year, even when we don’t have Medical Expeditions. We work with other institutions, International and local NGO’s, and the local Municipal Government providing support for their medical and social programs. The Belen Clinic is available to all of these institutions and we are proud to work together.
Medical attentions with the Denver School of Nursing

On April 17th and June 11th, Amazon Promise and the Denver School of Nursing, once again, organized two different clinics to see patients in Belén. We had the support of 3 doctors, 1 lab technician, 1 dentist, 3 translators and other logistical staff from 8.00 am to 2.30 pm. The most frequent health problems; were bronchitis, diarrhea, fever, malnutrition, dermatitis and many other problems. The nursing students assisted each Doctor and also provided information on hygiene, pregnancy, and other basic health issues to patients while they waited to be seen by the doctor.

In the afternoon, the nurses gave informative and demonstrative training in first aid for kids, and breast feeding instruction for young mothers. People were very enthusiastic participating, asking questions and sharing experiences.

Medical attention with the Harvard University Community Health Council

We are always looking for new partners who have the good heart to support people with health problems in Loreto. In August of this year Amazon Promise and the Harvard University Community Health Council, led by Teaching Fellow Adam Frange, held two days of clinics for residents of Belen who are still homeless since a massive fire destroyed many huts last year. Not only did we provide basic medical and dental care, but counseling was offered to the many people still without a home and suffering from emotional problems.

Amazon Cares Veterinary Clinic

On August 6th and 7th, Amazon Promise, in coordination with the NGO Amazon Cares and their Peruvian Director, Sr. Bruno Antoine, organized a Veterinary Clinic in our Belen Clinic. It was a huge success and the people in the area were very responsive. Amazon Cares offered spaying and neutering, vaccinations, vitamins, surgery for dogs and cats, and provided animal health education to the owners. The AC team also caught and sterilized many street dogs in the area.
It was very exciting to see how helping the animals we are helping to take care of the health of our families too.

**Other activities with the Peruvian Goverment and private institutions**

We are sharing our clinic facility with the organization La Restinga, a private institution who is working with the local government to give training to women in Health and Nutrition; they are learning how to cook healthy for their kids under 5 years old.

Also the Municipal Government of Belen is working with the Housing Ministry of Peru, COFOPRI and CENSICO, to build wood houses in Belén. Their interest is to teach men to learn how to build these houses, and in this way, they can create jobs for the people in the area. Amazon Promise is providing the facility to train people who will work on this important project.

Thank you to each volunteer during the year, without your support we would not be able to continue supporting all of these important and different activities for the people in Loreto-Peru.

**Volunteers Wanted for February and May 2014!**

We have openings for our three week February and two week May (remote) medical teams. Whether you are a medical professional, student or simply looking for a giving and rewarding experience of a lifetime, we have a job for you! **The remote May medical team** travels to native Achuar, Quechua or Awajun communities. Because these areas are in more remote regions of the Amazon, teams are limited to 8 volunteers. All volunteers must be in good physical condition, have camped in rough terrain, and be very low maintenance!

**The February medical trip includes:** **Week One:** providing medical/dental care and health education in impoverished neighborhoods in and around Iquitos, and at the AP Belen Clinic. We will visit and do rounds at two local hospitals, and have a one day training session in **Amazonian traditional medicine**. **Weeks Two and Three:** Will be based out of a jungle camp or lodge traveling each day by boat to villages in the Yarapa River area near the start of the Amazon. You can volunteer for part or the entire 3 weeks. Contact Jackie: [Jackie@amazonpromise.org](mailto:Jackie@amazonpromise.org)

Check out incredible photos from the May 2013 (remote) medical trip: [http://share.shutterfly.com/action/welcome?sid=OAbOHLJji2btmLH3A](http://share.shutterfly.com/action/welcome?sid=OAbOHLJji2btmLH3A)

Also, photos of the 2013 Caring Awards in Washington, DC Oct. 2013 [http://share.shutterfly.com/share/received/album.sfly?sid=OAbOHLJji2btmL1aA](http://share.shutterfly.com/share/received/album.sfly?sid=OAbOHLJji2btmL1aA)
AP Medical Director, Robert Hyzy, MD, receives the University of Michigan Medical School Dean’s Award for Community Service

On October 30, 2013 Amazon Promise Medical Director Bob Hyzy was awarded the University of Michigan Medical School Dean’s Award for Community Service by Dean James Woolliscroft, MD for his work in Peru on behalf of Amazon Promise. The Medical School recognizes exceptional accomplishments by faculty and staff in the areas of teaching, research, clinical care, community service and administration. The award winners are open to new ideas, tolerant of risk, and willing to change. Bob is a Professor of Medicine in the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of Michigan.

Bob has made seven medical trips to Peru since 2007, caring for between 1300-1900 patients per trip. After returning from his first trip, he created a three and a half week fourth year medical student elective under the aegis of the University of Michigan Global Reach. In total, he has brought a total of twenty-six fourth year medical students, three medicine residents, a pulmonary fellow and three faculty members from the University of Michigan down to Peru to work with AP.

Bob was asked to become Medical Director of Amazon Promise in the spring of 2008. He has helped AP President Patty Webster and other AP Board members advance its’ mission in several ways. These have included:

- Submitting a grant to Against Malaria to obtain 2,000 insecticide treated bednets and travelling with an AP team to the Upper Maranon River region of Loreto to distribute them.
- Receiving a humanitarian award and grant from the American College of Chest Physicians and using the money to install a toilet and water system in the AP clinic in Belen.
- Submitting and receiving a grant with the Ann Arbor Rotary to obtain a GE V-Scan handheld ultrasound currently being used by Amazon Promise teams in Peru.

This February Bob will return to Peru on his sixth fourth year medical student elective with another team from the University of Michigan. Congratulations Roberto!

Soy Capaz - "Exploring Community Needs and Changing Environmental Realities"
By Jessica Jefferson
(Jessica is a recipient of the Amazon Promise Beth Toby Grossman Memorial Scholarship in Public Health)
As a graduate student focusing on Tropical Conservation and Global Health, working with Amazon Promise provided the perfect opportunity to explore the linkages between environmental health and environmental stewardship in jungle communities. As water contamination from commercial mining and oil drilling effect rivers and plastic and non-organic trash accumulates in communities, the intersection between environmental conservation and human health becomes a key concern in isolated jungle communities without continuous access to healthcare services. Using participatory methodologies, including focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and direct participant observation, I conducted a community needs assessment focused on environmental changes and the realities in six communities where Amazon Promise works. I was able to spend 3-7 days in each community conducting interviews and living with a family. I then analyzed qualitative and quantitative data with a focus on overall patterns, gender differentiated opinions, and the impact of the isolation of the community on responses.

High isolation communities were found to have greater needs and concerns related to accessing healthcare and health knowledge as well as increased importance placed on external factors, such as stable jobs and government social programs. However, all communities were found to have similar skills and face similar negative environmental changes. Gender disaggregated data suggested that men are more concerned with economic forces, including jobs and agricultural production, while women focus on the general well-being and provision of goods for their children. Overall, members of the communities in this region identified increasing scarcity of fish, animals, and fruits as well as negative environmental changes, including unpredictable weather, reduced yields, and changing water resources, as key changes they face on a daily basis. These findings indicate that non-profit organizations should focus their efforts on promoting environmental stewardship and working cooperatively with communities to mitigate and face these changes while also understanding cultural factors.

Jessica providing hygiene education in the Achuar village of Aimentza. 
May 2013
Key to moving from the knowledge that jungle communities should conserve or manage their natural resources is promoting behavior change through outreach aimed at women. Women were more concerned than men with natural conservation because of their links with tourism through their artesania. Women formed the majority of my interviewees and their hospitality and willingness to engage on the issues facing their communities was encouraging. The people in the communities were more than willing to speak with me and were eager to learn more on topics ranging from basic health knowledge to how to mitigate agricultural pests. This supports the outreach efforts of ¡Soy Capaz! and also the value of the clinics Amazon Promise provides the communities. Many thanks to Elena, Adriana, Patty and the rest of the Amazon Promise team for making my months in Peru such an awesome experience!

Toilets For People – Presents - The CRAPPER!
Jason Kass, President Founder TfP

Anyone who has been to Belen knows how bad the toilet situation is. As with many other flood-prone areas around the world, the residents of Belen do not have access to safe, conventional toilet facilities like flush toilets or pit latrines. The community’s default toilet, therefore, is a plastic bag thrown from the window - or worse, relieving oneself directly in the open drainage channels or open water during the rainy season.

According to the World Health Organization, improved sanitation reduces diarrhea death rates by a third. The devastating fact is that diarrhea is largely preventable. Yet it is responsible for 1.5 million deaths every year, mostly among children under five years old living in developing countries. Providing access and education to hygienic sanitation solutions is a basic need of health - but also human dignity.

Toilets for People (TfP) is devoted to providing secure, sanitary, and dignified means of going to the bathroom - one of our most basic needs. TfP has been working with Amazon Promise since 2010 when we installed a water filtration system and composting toilet at the clinic. Our commitment to bringing safe, convenient, sustainable toilets to the people of Belen remains strong as we plan a pilot composting toilet distribution program in the Spring of 2014.
TfP plans to bring five (5) private, family-scale bathroom facilities to Belen. While five toilets is a modest beginning, it is necessary to start the transition to healthier sanitation solutions throughout the area. We believe the composting toilet is the simplest and most sustainable way to approach improving the health of the community.

TfP has developed an affordable composting toilet, made out materials that can be sourced locally and will stand up to the rough living situation in an area with high water. We call our toilet the CRAPPER (the Compact, Rotating, Aerobic, Pollution Preventing, Excreta Reducer).

The pilot program will train the family members, Amazon Promise, and local craftsman how to construct and maintain the toilets - providing new job expertise, as well as hygiene education. We hope that providing the toilets to local families will help keep the toilets cleaner and working properly - as we all have pride in a clean place to go to the bathroom. The families will also give TfP good insight into how the toilets will really be used when implemented on a larger scale. Toilets for People is devoted to bringing healthier sanitation solutions to people all over the world. We have appreciated the support and guidance of Amazon Promise and are looking forward to implementing this pilot program in a few short months.
When I was around eighteen I was watching one of those commercials about starving children in war torn Africa. The images were both shocking and inspiring. I had no money but I called the Red Cross and volunteered to go to Africa and do what I could to help. The Nurse who spoke to me knew I was sincere and was kind enough to give me some very good advice. She informed me that volunteering to go to a place like Africa can frequently be traumatic, especially for someone so young. I was gently told this was not my time and I would most likely be a burden on such an intense trip. She encouraged me to work up to this level of commitment by getting some medical training, and volunteering on some less intense trips first. It was hard to hear. She encouraged me to continue to volunteer ensuring me that the rewards are much greater than the sacrifice.

I took her advice and went to school and volunteered at home. After graduation from nursing school, I was further inspired while attending a lecture at Sacramento State University by Melonie Rockwell, NP, a dedicated frequent volunteer with the Rainforest Health Project (RHP), later known as Amazon Promise (AP). I joined their group and went on my first medical aid trip to the Amazon Jungle in 1995. There I met Patty Webster, one of the most amazing, giving, and inspiring people I have ever known. It was a unique, enriching, adventurous experience like no other at that time. Since then I have been all over the world from Africa to Asia, conducting my own and attending many medical aid clinics, including six more trips to the Amazon jungle with AP. I am very proud to say that I have been involved with Amazon Promise since the early years. I can personally attest to the impact that Patty and her group has had on the overall health of the people of the Peruvian Amazon basin. I have seen it gradually improve over the years. This improvement can be directly traced back to the continuing effort made by AP. I am very lucky to have had a small part in that. My experiences in the Amazon have been some of the most memorable of my volunteer career. It is true that the rewards are truly greater than the sacrifice. I have been able to come to realize that the advice I received at the age of eighteen was indeed very true.

With this in mind, I have attempted to raise my children with this same sense of responsibility to humanity. They have been introduced to, and volunteered to aid, those less fortunate since they were young. I feel this has had a powerful and positive impact on their lives. I feel they have grown into better adults as a result. They have been asking to go with me to the Peruvian Amazon since they were children and have listened to many stories about Patty and our adventures over the last 7 trips and 19 years.

In July of this year I returned to Peru with AP, and was able to bring along my daughter, Katherine. It was great to spend some memorable time with my old friends Patty, Shego, and AP Dental Director, Dr. Bob Fulton. I was able to meet some new friends as well. This trip included several medical students who were all quite
impressive and wonderfully positive influences for my daughter. They seemed so young (or maybe I am getting old). I enjoyed their enthusiasm, and was impressed with their caring professionalism. Both Bob and I were able impart occasional tidbits of what we would like to be able to say “wisdom” from our life experience. The students, in turn, were respectfully receptive. Their trip with AP to the Amazon was a wonderful learning experience both medically and in a global social context. These young adults represent the next generation, with the world unfolding at their feet, ready to take the baton. They reminded me a lot of myself when I was a young man, and a wise nurse was kind enough to give me some valuable guidance that influenced my life and the lives of all those I may possibly influence as well. The reward this time was not limited to the impact on the health of the people of the Amazon Basin, but also included knowing that we may have also had an impact on the future of my daughter and these promising young practitioners. Moreover, what will their gift to humanity be?

_____________________________

Children getting ready to march in the Independence Day parade in the village of Jaldar. July 2013
Photo: Joyce Mancini, NP
Finding my life’s work in the Amazon
Kari Sorger, RN - Three-time Alumni

Almost 14 years ago, I embarked upon an adventure that would forever change my views and opinions of the world as well as myself. I remember my aunt, Melonie Rockwell, NP, sharing many of her stories about visiting the Amazon and imagining what an adventure! It was something I never thought I could do, but at the age of 17, I was given the opportunity to go to the Amazon with my aunt and cousin, Laurel. I had no idea what to expect, but I knew deep down this was something I had to experience.

I arrived in one of the most beautiful places on earth. I was in awe of the jungle, its indigenous people, and the compassion of the team I worked with. From that first trip, I was absolutely hooked and knew I would be back.

Now I have been to the Amazon three times. Each trip has been filled with wonderful moments. However, it was my last visit that changed my life. On this trip, I did not yet work in the medical field; I was running an accounting firm. I detested my job, but I didn’t yet know where my true passion lied.

I have always been drawn to helping people in need. It seems like second nature to be that shoulder for someone to lean on and for me to aid in someone else’s wellbeing. In fact, I find this so natural that it never occurred I could actually do it for a living. While working with Amazon Promise, I soaked up every bit of medical information and experience I could. It was easy to follow instructions on how to do registrations, wound care and scabies baths, and I really enjoyed what I was doing! I most enjoyed being part of a team, led by the most selfless person I have ever met, Patty Webster.

In addition to helping the people of the Amazon, Patty’s organization gave me the wake-up call I needed and showed me my path in life. During the last few days of my trip, my aunt told me, “You should be a nurse, you are such a natural!” I only pondered this for a week before enrolling in nursing school when I returned home. I have now been a registered nurse for almost three years, and I owe my success to my experiences in the Peruvian Amazon.
After years of hearing about Amazon Promise trips, I finally had the opportunity to participate in a trip this past February 2013. I was lucky enough to be able to ditch my books and leave behind my life as a third year medical student for a two-week trip to the jungle outside Iquitos. I had spent some time in the Peruvian Amazon—a weekend here, an overnight trip there—but never a prolonged stay. I secretly worried about how I would handle the isolation, the long days, and my roommates (namely those with eight legs).

I was eager to participate in any capacity on this trip and wound up in a two-week stint as a dental assistant. I had no experience working in dentistry. My first day of clinic, I met AP Peruvian Dental Director Neil Chavez. He greeted me with a large smile that made it evident that he loved his job. He showed me how to set up the wooden dental chair, anesthesia, and dental equipment. He taught me the Spanish words for each of his instruments, none of which I knew how to say even in my native English. The learning curve was steep and time was limited: as soon as we set up, we already had a line of patients stretching out the door. Despite the high-pressure, fast-paced environment, Neil was patient when I confused tools, which all initially looked identical to my untrained eyes.

As the days went on, I became more adept at my job. I began anticipating which instruments Neil would need and our efficiency noticeably improved. After becoming more comfortable with my job and finally safe from drowning in a sea of patients, I was able to absorb my surroundings. I began watching the line of people extending out the door, eagerly awaiting cleanings, fillings, and extractions. A mother with a gaggle of kids waited her turn patiently, keeping her curious children out from underfoot of Neil and me. When her family’s turn finally came, she propped her first child up in our wooden dentist chair. The child was worried after seeing bloody teeth emerge from Neil’s dental tools all day, and she let out a whimper. Neil’s singsong voice chimed in and the child immediately fell silent, her large brown eyes glued to Neil’s smile. In a matter of minutes, Neil had administered the anesthetic, readied the decayed tooth, and gently rocked it back and forth until it slipped out of its cavity. The child appeared dumbfounded, unsure if we had finished the procedure or were readying our tools for the real torture. Her mother bustled over and told her we were done. The daughter’s lips curled into a wide smile, revealing her newest aperture packed with fresh white gauze, hopped off the chair, and ran to catch up with her friends playing soccer.
It was clear that our dental team of two relieved a lot of suffering during our short stay. We were able to educate everyone on the importance of maintaining a healthy mouth, which is key in making a difference. In medicine, the results are often slow: a person has a condition is prescribed a pill, and (with some luck) the condition improves over time. In dentistry, the results are immediate and the effects can be profound. That little girl’s mother told us that she had been unable to eat due to the pain of multiple dental caries. When we removed her tooth, we knew with a fair amount of certainty that she would soon be pain free.

At the end of that day during my stay, I took my coconut, a gift from the village for my help, and stepped into the canoe for the scenic trip back to the big boat. As we skimmed along the water, a tranquil tributary of the Amazon, I felt the magnitude of the river submerge a piece of my spirit. I felt myself sink deep into the river and mingle with the millions of creatures of the forest. Now, as I sit at a computer back in the United States, I know there is a part of me left deep in the Amazon Rainforest that is eagerly waiting to return. (Editor’s note: AP provided dental care to 855 patients in 2013)
A storm coming our way on the Ucayali River. Feb. 2013

These three cuties can be found hanging out over the door of hut #6 at Yacumama in February 2014!

Amazon Exotica  Photo: John Hartberg
## 2013 Patients Seen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location River</th>
<th>1st Quarter</th>
<th>2nd Quarter</th>
<th>3rd Quarter</th>
<th>2nd trip of 3rd Quarter</th>
<th>TOTAL 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iquitos, Belen Jungle communities of the Ucayali, Yarapa, Tahuayo Rivers</td>
<td>Native Communities of the Upper Pastaza River</td>
<td>Iquitos, Belen, communities of the Ucayali, Yarapa and Tahuayo Rivers</td>
<td>Iquitos, Belen, communities of the Province of Requena, Ucayali Tapiche, Rivers and Iberia Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Feb. 9 – Mar. 2</th>
<th>May 11 - 25</th>
<th>July 13 – Aug. 6</th>
<th>Sept. 7 – Oct. 1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Men 15+</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Women 15+</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Adults</strong></td>
<td><strong>682</strong></td>
<td><strong>410</strong></td>
<td><strong>810</strong></td>
<td><strong>895</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Boys 6 - 14</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls 6-14</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>159</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boys 0-5</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls 0-5</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>168</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Peds</strong></td>
<td><strong>660</strong></td>
<td><strong>447</strong></td>
<td><strong>983</strong></td>
<td><strong>670</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1342</strong></td>
<td><strong>857</strong></td>
<td><strong>1793</strong></td>
<td><strong>1565</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contact us if you would like to see a more detailed annual patient report (in Spanish). AP also attended to 857 dental patients in 2013!

---

**Stitches by Flashlight!**

This Achuar man fell from his roof lacerating his head and puncturing his stomach with a pair of scissors he was carrying.

Drs. Vida Reklaitis and Miguel Pinedo stitch a large laceration while Med student, Heidi Moline, holds the light!

May 2013
AP Lab Technician, Nolbeto Tangoa, sets up his station outside of clinic for better light!

AP Promoter of Health, Juanito Yuyarima and son, are from the village of San Jose, Ucayali River.

AP staff, Ricky and Alter Coloma, working hard in pharmacy. July 2013

Amazon Promise is extremely grateful to Irina Karnaugh, AP Bookkeeper, for her many years of volunteer service.

Jose Luis is ready for the three hour hike to the Achuar village of Aimentza, May 2013.
For some reason I’ve always desired to travel and help people. When I was 17 years old and that desire grew stronger and stronger, it eventually drove me to study medicine. Studying to be a physician is very demanding and very time-consuming. During my studies and early career I never found the time to actually practice what, one of my faculties would call “real medicine”. I had always been correcting and managing chronic conditions that drive people to have diseases of excess. Having my own practice now, hypertension, diabetes, obesity and drug abuse seem to be the cornerstones of my routine in patient care. Deciding to take a different path and really “make” time to brainstorm and think of other ways to help people, I came across Amazon Promise, and started to look into it. I liked the fact that it wasn’t church or religion-based, that it was a relatively small operation, and that it was located in Latin America… my Spanish would come into great practice! I had to convince my wife that I would not be around for a couple of weeks. That was not easy, but eventually she agreed. So, I got on a plane and arrived in Iquitos, Peru on September 2013. This small city is located in the northeastern part of Peru, deep in the Amazon jungle, and was one of the center stages of what was known as the “Rubber Boom” in the late 19th century. I got to know the people from Amazon Promise, both local and from Michigan USA. Everyone was very welcoming and very organized on what they were doing. I got the sense that they knew the culture and were familiar with the geography. It was an experience that I will never forget. The climate was hot and the people very warm and friendly. The other volunteers, like with myself, were also very motivated and happy to be there. You could easily tell that everyone wanted to help, and were enjoying everything that was happening. There were, throughout the trip, ups and downs. Although at times comfort was not invited, the magic of the whole experience made it ok. All Latin American countries struggle with social and economic problems, and they are reflected on chronic health issues of the population. Throughout my trip with Amazon Promise I had the unique experience and the opportunity to see this firsthand, to touch the disease with my own hands and to listen to the people there. The problems are not the same as in developed countries. Infections are different from what we commonly see in the United States, so I had to get familiarized with them. Things like malaria, dengue and plenty of fungal and skin infections. Of course we had
to take plenty of precautions for ourselves. We had a very good insight as to things we should look out for and precautions that we should take from the people and organizers from Amazon Promise. We were never alone on this, which made the whole experience even more enjoyable and safe. We were all in contact with AIDS and HIV, tuberculosis and even leishmaniasis (which I had never seen before!). Thanks to Amazon Promise we were able to not only identify them and treat them, but to also provide guidance to people that were seeking help. It was these patients that gave me the opportunity to help in a more direct and basic human way. That experience was what I was looking for when I signed up.

We got to travel as a moving clinic through the jungle via the Amazon River. We visited several isolated villages and camped under the stars. It was a very intense journey, but there is something about being part of a hard working team with a common goal that keeps you going. The patients that we saw and cared for were happy to receive help and were very patient to wait in long lines for their turn. One town even organized and threw us a farewell party!

For anyone out there looking for a good way to compliment everyday job-like routines, Amazon Promise is worth looking into. I personally enjoyed the trip, and enjoyed forming part of an awesome team. Looking forward to the next time!

Muchas gracias!
The Importance of Reaching Out to Others for Amazon Promise

On occasion we have all had conversations with people who are compassionate but aren’t sure how to give. And then there are those that feel that it just doesn’t make a difference in the ‘big picture’. However, if you are reading this newsletter, you are aware of Amazon Promise and know full that we do make a difference.

The work Amazon Promise does is important not solely because of what we do and how well we do it, but also because we have succeeded with so little. We are not a large organization with big overhead and a budget left over at the end of the year that we race to spend. This is very much a hands-on group of caring volunteers and donors like YOU who make their own sacrifices in money and time to serve the needs of others. In these tough economic times, your support is all the more critical as our organization struggles monthly to meet its obligations. On average it costs us less than $11 to treat each patient. This is admirable under any conditions, but it is especially remarkable when one considers the quality of care we provide and the logistical difficulty and expense inherent in reaching the populations we serve.

You can help by making a tax deductible monetary donation. You can also reach out to others to expand our donor pool. Talk to your friends, your companies, your places of worship. Although we are not a faith-based organization, we embrace values of serving the poor, the sick, the hungry, the lonely, the elderly and the hopeless.

You can also help by donating in other ways. You can donate frequent flyer miles, you can donate medicine, and you can donate your time. We need help with marketing and communications, public relations, reports, grant writing, locating grants, fundraising, seeking out appropriate strategic partners, and recruiting volunteers. While we sometimes receive offers to donate equipment, clothing and other large volume items, we simply don’t have the funds to pay for the shipping costs and customs duties should they apply; these types of material donations must therefore be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Lastly, we constantly need volunteers on our medical expeditions in order to provide the helping hands that serve thousands of poor people each year. Many of you have already volunteered, some of you multiple times. Spread the word. Share the experience. And of course, we welcome you back. You are family.

Patty
Make a Donation

Amazon Promise relies on private support to fund operations, expand services and provide a wide range of care to impoverished communities in Peru.

Monetary Gifts
If you would like to make a tax deductible donation, please mail your check or money order to:

Amazon Promise
P.O. Box 1304
Newburyport, MA, 01950
USA

Or, if you prefer you may also donate via PayPal from our website. However, please note that PayPal extracts a processing fee from the donation.

Material Donations
If you would like to make a non-monetary donation, please contact Kristina Server at kristina@amazonpromise.org. Please note that due to our financial constraints, we are unable to accept certain types of donations that require us to pay shipping fees or customs duties.

Other Options
Need a gift? Visit our Zazzle site to purchase AP t-shirts, mugs, bags etc. 25% of the price goes to helping AP: www.zazzle.com/amazonpromise. You may also purchase gifts or make donations to AP through charity networks GreaterGood Network, Changing the Present and Stuff Your Rucksack.

Donating from the UK!

We're happy to announce that all UK volunteers and general donors can now fundraiser to pay for a trip, or make a tax deductible donation to Amazon Promise thru the Charity Giving website! http://www.charitygiving.co.uk/charitysearch.asp?charitysearch=Amazon+promise&x=35&y=16

Volunteer

Join Us on a Medical Expedition
Please check out our website for the new 2014 schedule. We have several different volunteer medical expeditions planned for this coming year. If you have only a week or so available, join us for part of a longer expedition (excluding remote trips). You can also arrange your schedule to focus on our work in the city or jungle clinics. So pack your bags and join the growing team of Amazon Promise volunteers!
Volunteer Your Time

As mentioned in our newsletter, we need people to help with website content, marketing and communications, reports, grants, fundraising and outreach to potential strategic partners. If you have an interest, expertise and some time that you’d like to commit, please contact Kristina Server at kristina@amazonpromise.org.
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