

## HEADLINES



Honduran residents line up for medical services.

### Lifeline Recognition Program

*In our last issue we unveiled the Lifeline Recognition Program through which we will*

*work with our partners to identify stories of how Iridium equipment and/or service assisted with helping to save a life or diverting a disaster. This issue's story has Iridium phones in a supporting role, but showcases brave medical professionals going beyond the call of duty.*

The Virginia Hospital Center Medical Brigade has recently returned from its seventh annual, week-long trip to Honduras, one of the poorest countries in all of the Americas. The Brigade is a 501c3 non-profit organization that sponsors annual, humanitarian-healthcare mission trips to this third-world country to assist people with crucial medical services. A team of 77 doctors, surgeons, nurses, and non-medical support personnel each donated a week of vacation to treat 6,885 underserved Honduran citizens in Comayagua and four other poverty-stricken, outlying rural villages.

Medical services provided included adult and pediatric primary care, ophthalmology, physical therapy, audiology, and 109 surgical operations. Refurbished eyeglasses were fitted to 2,400 adults and children following on-site auto-refractor examinations. Countless sets of crutches, walkers, and wheelchairs were provided to the physically impaired. A certified audiologist, who represented a new field of care for the Brigade, fit and tuned hearing-aids for 35 patients, including a 12-year old girl who was able to hear for the first time in her life. Surgical operations ranged from cesarean sections and hysterectomies, to laparoscopic gall bladder procedures, to numerous corrective strabismus surgeries, to ear-nose-and-throat procedures, to plastic surgery, including a four and a half hour procedure to help a 16-month old girl, tragically burned when wind blew a candle into her crib.

Medications, supplies, and equipment valued at more than \$600,000, including a fully-equipped and refurbished ambulance, all acquired with the financial support of more than 150 individuals and corporate entities, were donated along with these efforts. The mission brought with them a supply of Iridium phones and they relied on them heavily to ensure the safety of the team and to keep the lines of communications open, particularly in the rural country villages miles



away from the nearest city where the team would spend approximately nine hours a day.

The Medical Brigade expanded its outreach mission this year by seeking and receiving full support from the Honduran government for its Remote Village Project. The Remote Village Project provided didactic classroom instruction and clinical training to six well-respected rural community leaders from two remote villages to function as certified Community Health Workers

(CHWs). These CHWs will provide year-round counseling on community health improvements and preventive care, focusing on issues such as accessing and utilizing available treatment for tuberculosis, and the importance of clean water, proper nutrition, hygiene, and proper body mechanics for lifting. They have also been trained to diagnose and treat a limited number of medical conditions common to central Honduras, including infant diarrhea, ear infections, bronchitis, simple skin disorders, and intestinal parasites. The Medical Brigade has provided all necessary equipment and medications to appropriately empower both locations, and will remain in contact with each throughout the coming year to track the amount of medicine dispensed and to gauge whether it is supplying what is truly needed. A return trip to both of these villages is planned for the first quarter of 2007.

For more information and to learn more about donating to this worthy cause, access [www.virginiahospitalcenter.com](http://www.virginiahospitalcenter.com), and click on "Ways to Give."