



Los Cabos Children's Foundation Completes Year 2013 Pediatric Cardiac Program



A historic collaboration benefiting 27 children from Baja California Sur

SAN JOSE DEL CABO (BCS) December 15, 2013 – The Los Cabos Children's Foundation (LCCF) successfully completed its second round of pediatric cardiac operations December 2 through 6 at Hospital General Juan María de Salvatierra in La Paz, BCS. To date, 27 children have received critical medical assistance through this historic program spearheaded by the LCCF and delivered through support from the Mexican government, Children's Hospital and Medical Center of Omaha, Nebraska (USA), La Paz non-profit Corazon de Niño A.C. and the private sector.

At a press conference on December 2 at Hospital General Juan María de Salvatierra, BCS Secretary of Health Dr. Virgilio Jiménez Patiño warmly welcomed the press, patients' families and the US medical team. Dr. Jiménez praised the LCCF's pediatric cardiac program, hosted at Salvatierra Hospital, and emphasized that this collaboration is statewide and inclusive, covering all children regardless of medical insurance affiliation, lack of insurance or their home municipality.



BCS State Health advisor Dr. Rogelio Ortíz Batanero introduced Chief Pediatric Cardiac Surgeon Dr. James M. Hammel of Children's Hospital and Medical Center, Omaha. Dr. Hammel thanked the LCCF and its President-CEO Greg Edwards and the families of the young patients "... for your confidence, for not being afraid. It's a privilege to be here serving you."

Greg Edwards, assisted by medical interpreter Dr. Cesar Humberto Hernández Montenegro, recounted the LCCF's efforts to foster the development of pediatric cardiac surgery in Baja California Sur. By building relationships and coordinating with local institutions, government agencies, and visiting U.S. pediatric cardiac medical teams, the LCCF is successfully transitioning its surgical program from US-based hospitals to La Paz, the State capital.



Stressing the importance of the local LCCF/Salvatierra cardiac program in saving more children's lives and removing the need to travel far from home for surgery, Edwards revealed that over the past 10 years, US-based operations had benefited 14 children. Typical costs for these operations

would begin at \$100,000, however, through the generosity and partnership with the Children's Hospital in Omaha, the cost to the Foundation has averaged \$35,000 dollars per child.

"Here in La Paz, with the support of Hospital Salvatierra, in just one year we have been able to treat 27 children with cardiac problems that require surgery at an average cost of \$6,000 dollars each," Edwards announced to applause.

Edwards also thanked all involved, lauding the 22-member U.S. surgical team, led by Dr. James Hammel, which included intensive care pediatricians and nurses, pediatric heart surgeons, a pediatric cardiologist, cardiac perfusionist, anesthesiologist, respiratory therapist and a medical interpreter.



An advance cardiac team, led by pediatric cardiologist Dr. Steve Kindel of the Children's Hospital of Omaha, assisted by local pediatric cardiologist, Dr. Richard McFaul, evaluated more than 60 children with congenital heart disease to identify those most in need of the December operations.



The first round of cardiac operations took place June 17 to 22, 2013 with ten children, who returned December 2 for evaluation by Pediatric Cardiologist Dr. Jeffrey Delaney of the Children's Hospital and Dr. Richard McFaul. All received echocardiograms and were pronounced in good health.



And, in collaboration with Grammy winner Terry Townson as musical director and Corazon de Niño member Lidia Acuña as coordinator, the children formed the LCCF's Coro de Pajaritos (Little Bird Choir). The choir will grow with new heart heroes from December's operations and each new program round.

Greg Edwards also defined the LCCF's long-term goal of providing specialized training to the Salvatierra medical team to create a self-sufficient pediatric cardiac unit. In 2014, Dr. Hammel's group will again participate in two surgery programs, with reduced staff, giving Salvatierra's team a greater role and increased responsibility for the operations.

Thanking, local dentists and CONALEP (National Technical Education College) for their invaluable help, Edwards also reached out to State Immigration Delegate Álvaro de la Peña Angulo and Autotransportes Águila director José López Soto for their assistance. Special thanks went out to the La Paz-based civil association Corazon de Niño...



...and to Omaha-based Heart Heroes Kitty Burton and Sondra Dubas, mothers of children with congenital heart disease, who provided the young "heart heroes" patients with capes, masks and super hero gear.

BCS First Lady and SEDIF President Maria Helena Hernández de Covarrubias, who has worked tirelessly with the LCCF to create the cardiac program, thanked the US medical team for their "priceless help," husband Governor Marcos Covarrubias Villaseñor for his vision, and spoke about her commitment to BCS children. *"As a mother of three I have a responsibility to my children, and as the wife of the governor, I have a responsibility to all children in our state,"* the first lady said.





Also present and important to the cardiac program were Hospital General Juan María de Salvatierra Director, Dr. Roberto Rodríguez Pulido and Chief of Pediatrics, Dr. Miguel Angel Badillo Pallares.



At the close of the press conference, the Coro de Pajaritos sang "Yo Quiero Tener Un Millón de Amigos" (I Want to Have a Million Friends) to rounds of applause, a few tears and much joy.

Following the week-long surgeries a farewell dinner for the U.S. medical team was held Saturday December 7 at the Costa Baja Resort. Governor Covarrubias and his wife hosted and recognized the U.S. medical team, the Salvatierra hospital doctors and staff, non-profit organizations, and all supporters who made this round of pediatric cardiac operations a resounding success.



With Greg Edwards looking on, Governor Covarrubias said the BCS State Government is sparing no efforts or resources to work with civil associations and individuals to give hope to children with congenital heart disease.

"I want to thank you from the heart, the state government thanks you on behalf of the parents of the children who have been given a new lease on life, who have come to take part in this noble cause. Words fail to express our enormous gratitude, please tell them they have a home here and take the love of all of these children with you," the governor said.

Maria Helena Hernández de Covarrubias renewed her commitment to support the cardiac program, saying it is necessary to give families the tools to overcome adversity and to cope with difficult situations such as heart disease.

Governor Covarrubias also delivered very welcome news: Federal Senator for BCS Carlos Mendoza Davis had recently received approval from the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS) for a State pediatric cardiologist position; long a goal and significant gain for the program.

Gail Freels, Chair of the LCCF Board of Directors, noted that the LCCF's annual fundraiser, The Fred Duckett Challenge, will take place at Querencia Golf Club March 20-22, 2014. In its eighth year, "The Duckett" provides the majority of funding for the LCCF's medical programs.

"Knowing we are now providing a pediatric cardiac program in La Paz with substantially reduced surgery costs shows our donors just how hard the LCCF is working to treat as many children as possible throughout the state while making every dollar count. We look forward to an excellent turn out," Freels said.

Gail Freels also noted that LCCF supporters unable to attend The Duckett Challenge may support the foundation by donating online through the LCCF's website.





“The LCCF, with offices in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and San José del Cabo, BCS is a US Non Profit Organization 501 c 3 and a Mexican Fundación Sin Fines de Lucro - A.C (Non Profit Civil Association) and all donations are tax-deductible,” Freels added.

Greg Edwards stressed that although it appeared that the LCCF’s cardiac program is new, especially in La Paz, the road had been a long one, going back almost 10 years.

“Without the dedicated efforts of many people and institutions from Mexico and the U.S., the infrastructure, the facilities, and the team the LCCF has today would not exist. From the beginning, this has been a collaboration that only goes to prove that when people decide to work in unity for the common good of children, monumental life-changing events can take place.

Estamos caminando juntos... we are walking together!” Edwards declared, closing the event.

