

Local Dentist Makes a Difference in Nicaragua

Written by Arizona Foothills Magazine

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An inspiring mission, with one inspiring cause... to get less fortunate people out of pain. Dr. Bradley A. Briggs, D.D.S. of Briggs Family and Cosmetic Dentistry in Scottsdale and Arizona Foothills' "Best Dentist in the Valley" has recently traveled to Nicaragua to offer dental care to remote cities with limited quality equipment, and quality dentists. Arizona Foothills had the pleasure to interview Dr. Briggs and get the inside scoop on his moving trip to Central America.



When did you travel to Nicaragua and how many people joined you?

"I went to Nicaragua June 17-28 with four friends that were in my dental school class: Dr. Jeff Stonebraker, Dr. Andy Toms, Dr. Dean Brewer and Dr. Amanda Brewer. My sister Serina Briggs, who is a dental hygienist, went as well. Also my brother Stephen Briggs and his girlfriend Lorrie Hatfield, Tawny Perkins, and Jamie Smith Van Laar went as a support team (i.e. sterilization, set up break down surgical setups, patient management, etc.)"

How many times have you been to Nicaragua? Why did you choose Nicaragua?

"I went to Nicaragua 10 years ago with Loma Linda School of Dentistry and the same four classmates, so this was kind of a reunion trip. This time the dental school was in Nicaragua weeks before us. They left us supplies in cases at a school, so all we had to do was find a town who needed us, along with transportation, and the equipment would be ready for us. This made the trip much easier, as we didn't have to transport enough equipment for five dentists to work for an entire week. We flew in with handheld x-ray equipment and disposable supplies.

What was the trip's main goal?

I have been on many mission trips to various countries and the mission is always the same... to get people out of pain. Access to quality dental care in urban and especially remote areas is limited.

Last year I worked in Romania in gypsy villages and was horrified to find that they pulled teeth with no anesthetic and often waiting for them to become infected enough to pull with pliers. When we set up in a local community, people will often line up all day to have us see them, waiting 6-8 hours patiently. When we were there 10 years ago, we were surprised to hear that a lady had walked a full day with two children to have us get her child out of pain. The stories we hear and see are amazing.

On this trip, I did mainly surgery, as there were so many people who needed tooth extractions and infections removed. It kept me busy. We had full set-ups with drills and x-rays so other team members were able to do fillings and even a few root canals.

It can be life changing for a 14-year-old-girl to lose a front tooth due to decay. Dr. Brewer took root canal equipment and was able to save a few front teeth for teenage girls."

How many people did you help?

"We saw more than 160 people within the week that we were in Nicaragua."

Kids or adults?

"A mixture of both."



Where did you stay? Any dangerous moments?

"We stayed in a little hotel in Boaca, which was no Hilton, just tile floor and a bed. The shower was just a pipe coming out of the wall releasing cold water.

On the fourth night when we arrived back at the hotel, we were told to stay inside because there had been a coup. The local government had

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been overthrown and riot police were out in the streets. We witnessed no violence but we did hear firecrackers in the streets and it was quite noisy all night."

What was your greatest enjoyment?

"It's always rewarding to help someone's immediate need, but on the last night in Boaco they had a fiesta with music and dancing and they fed us. It was wonderful to see the people we had worked with for the last week celebrate with central American style. Also, I have to say, it was pretty great to watch the world cup football games with the crazy fans of Central America."

How did you have time to do this?

"I took almost two weeks off from work."

When did you become a D.D.S.?

"I graduated from Loma Linda University in 2004."

What is the history of your practice and your personal belief/goals in life?

"I now practice with my father at Briggs Family and Cosmetic Dentistry in Scottsdale. It is amazing to work with my family and I could not have a better mentor than my father who's list of personal and professional accomplishments is too long to list.

My personal belief in life is that I have been sooooo blessed with all that I have and feel a responsibility to give back to others, i.e. mission work. In my practice and in life, my belief is simple... take care of people."

How did you win "Best Dentist in the Valley" on AZFoothills.com?

"I have only been out of dental school six years. I could not tell you how I have been fortunate enough to win the awards that I have. I would like to think it is due to my level of patient care and craftsmanship."

How do you define success?

"Success for me is being able to live my life how I want and sleep well at night when the day is over."



How can our readers help and contribute to your great cause?

"This trip and the supplies we took with us were provided by donations from my patients. I love donating my time and skills, but it is a life-saver to have people who believe in me and what I am doing, donate funding. We have a non-profit organization called Boundary Breakers, but i have never done fundraising in the community.

People can look at our Web site: www.briggsfamilydentistry.com, but really we are not set up to raise money or market our mission work. What my patients give is out of the kindness of their heart."