



Flying Samaritans *Mother Lode Chapter* Clinic Report - April 2022

We're Back!!



A GRAND SLAM!!! That's how I would describe our April, 2022 clinic. For the first time since COVID, we were able to provide all four clinic disciplines: medical, dental, optical and chiropractic! It was a GREAT feeling to be able to witness the dedication and expertise of so many volunteers working together to get our clinics rolling again! But first, a recap of the past several months!

As you know, our clinics had been completely shut down between March of 2020 and June of 2021. Then, in July of 2021, Margie Wilson with her local volunteers held a restart of the optical clinic. Attendance was light compared to our pre-COVID patient numbers. But after such a devastating pandemic, it was expected that our clients in San Quintin would have to rebuild their expectation of the Flying Samaritans monthly visits to San Quintin. In August, September and October of 2021, the Sams

returned to San Quintin to offer optical clinics as we strategized on to safest and most efficient way to be able to restart medical and dental clinics. During this time, Margie and Rick Wilson carried the torch in San Quintin on behalf of the entire Mother Lode Chapter.

In November, magic happened as we reopened the medical clinic with the incredible help of volunteers Jessica Willett (MD), Angela Cheung (PA), Kristina Young (medical scribe), Elise Palitz (RN) and Joe Borzelleri (RN). During this time, a vacancy in the Medical Clinic Coordinator position presented additional challenge to the restart of the clinic. Fortunately, the infectious thrill of helping San Quintin locals, the fresh smell of the ocean breeze at Hotel Santa Maria and perhaps a couple of margaritas worked to convince three of November's attendees to form our new Medical Clinic Coordinator Team! Jessica, Angela and Kristina bring a wonderful new energy to the organization and have already successfully recruited more care givers for the clinic! Also in November, Dr. John Demshar complemented Margie's "kick butt crew" in the Optical clinic. Bob Thompson assisted so many patients with his physical therapy expertise. Based on his prior clinic experiences and November's restart, Marty Weybret composed wonderful articles for you to enjoy in this newsletter. Pilot Ray Ratto saved our bacon by answering a last-minute plea for an additional needed pilot. Pilot Bob Amarel did a thorough inspection of our ground vehicles and noted all the points that need attention to keep them rolling. I was also fortunate to attend in November. Rick and Margie again carried the torch solo for the December, January and February clinics. We are SOOOOO lucky to have them!

In March, we returned to San Quintin to provide optical and medical clinics.

The Medical Clinic Coordinator team, now in full force, traveled with me as the only plane to go down on Friday. We arrived just after noon and decided we would drive to town for fresh fish tacos at El Parque then headed out to explore the oyster bay. We just couldn't pass up a delicious 'second lunch' offered by a bayside oyster shack.

Del Presidente



With hopes of restarting dental clinics in April, 2022, the March clinic was a critical time for us to give the dental clinic equipment a thorough checkout after having been dormant for so long. Cramping the equipment check into his busy work schedule, Charlie Arita (DDS) made a compacted trip to San Quintin with the help of pilot Peter Le Lievre departing for Baja early Saturday morning. Peter's wife, Lisa, and helper Julius Chang also made the trek. Although Peter's plane crew missed out on the usual street taco's on Friday, they certainly enjoyed dinner at Eucalypto! This was in reward for a successful checkout of the dental clinic equipment. A special thanks to our local here Cecilia for doing such a great cleaning job in the dental clinic before Charlie arrived. She is AWESOME!!!

This brings us to April, 2022. As of a couple of weeks before the clinic, we only had two airplane seats available, but we had a complete arsenal of volunteers signed up and ready to go! Once again, we reached out to pilot "Save Our Bacon" Ray Ratto, who willingly jumped at our plea for help. Fortunately, my planned work trip which conflicted with the April clinic canceled – and voila, I could fly as well. This made

for 3 airplanes and enough seats to bring our Grand Slam crew!

Thanks to everyone who made this Grand Slam clinic possible! We are ROLLING AGAIN!!!!

Looking forward, we have volunteers to provide optical, medical and dental clinics in May and June! San Quintin needs us, and we are ready to return to San Quintin in full force. Please register to join us for a clinic soon!

-Doug Wirzberger
Chapter President



Our masterful chef pictured on the left

COVID Testing for Clinic Due to the recent spike in cases due to the Omicron variant, we are required that each traveling volunteer submits a negative COVID test within 24 hours of departure for the clinic. To keep this as hassle-free as possible, any home test can be used. The test must be taken between 9AM and 10PM on the day before the clinic. A picture of the negative results must be sent via email or text message to Doug Wirzberger by 10Pm on the night before clinic departure. Attendees will receive further details via email a week before the clinic. We hope to be able to eliminate this requirement in the late summer. But for now, we surely appreciate your compliance, patience and understanding

NEW - Shareable QR Codes for Clinic

Now you can share QR codes (that can be opened with any smartphone camera) that link directly to the chapter website including signing up for clinic. Please feel free to share the codes below:



[Alma Luminosa Clinic](#)



www.flyingsamaritans.net



[Flying Sams Pilot Recruiting](#)



[Map to Alma Luminosa Clinic](#)

Introducing Our New Medical Clinic Coordinator Team!

Jessica Willett: Dr. Willett is a Family Medicine & Emergency Medicine trained physician based out of Northern California. She currently works in the ED at San Joaquin General Hospital. She has a background in education and is passionate about prehospital care, global health, and community outreach in limited-resource settings. She loves to travel and experience the world when she has time. She has worked closely with various international medical organizations and is excited to bring her experience to the Flying Samaritans.

Angela Cheung: Angela is a Physician Assistant with a background in Public Health. She works at San Joaquin General Hospital in Stockton, California and is dedicated to community advocacy with underserved populations. Her career thus far has been driven by volunteerism. In her free time, she loves to spend time with her two hairless cats, travel, and dive.

Kristina Young: Kristina is a pre-med student and currently works as a scribe at San Joaquin General Hospital, a busy level II trauma center. She is passionate about rural and community health, and plans to focus on these areas throughout her career. Born and raised in the Central Valley, she is now raising her own family in the place she has always called home. In her free time, she is an avid reader and amateur chef.



Left to right: Angela Cheung, Jessica Willett, and Kristina Young

Oscar Perez

Many of the pilots that fly with us often have come to know how friendly and helpful the staff at Mexicali Airport can be. Oscar Perez works as a Dispatcher at MMML and over the years has come to know about us and the work we do in San Quintin. He always goes out of his way to ensure that our transition through MMML goes as quickly and smoothly as possible.

Oscar was born in the Mexicali area. He and his wife, Armida Motijo Tovar, had two children: Armida Perez Montijo (27) and Oscar Felipe Perez Montijo (23). Oscar enjoys playing baseball, but lately really enjoys spending time at home with his family when he is not working. When Oscar was younger, he took a private pilot course which opened doors for him to be able to work at the Mexicali B. C. Airport Command. He worked at the Airport Command from 1992 - 2005. In 2007, he began working in the SENEAM office and has been working there ever since!

I know that after a long flight from Northern California to Mexicali, it's always a great feeling to be greeted by Oscar's warm smile. Oscar, we are lucky to have you as a Flying Samaritans Amigo!!!



Email Spam Folder

Email providers are making it more difficult to deliver email to you. The Flying Samaritans rely heavily on email as our primary means of communication with our members. Unfortunately, some email providers flag our communications as "spam" and the emails wind up in your spam or junk email folders. Please be sure to check your spam folders for our emails! More importantly, please mention this request to other members who may not be savvy enough to check their spam folders.

Pre-Departure COVID Test

Due to the recent spike in cases due to the Omicron variant, we are required that each traveling volunteer submits a negative COVID test within 24 hours of departure for the clinic. To keep this as hassle-free as possible, any home test can be used. The test must be taken between 9AM and 10PM on the day before the clinic. A picture of the negative results must be sent via email or text message to Doug Wirzberger by 10Pm on the night before clinic departure. Attendees will receive further details via email a week before the clinic. We hope to be able to eliminate this requirement in the late summer. But for now, we surely appreciate your compliance, patience and understanding.

Optical Clinic



The April optical clinic was amazing with sixty-nine patients seen. John Demshar, OD examined and refracted the patients while our great optical volunteers checked vision, auto-refracted and dispensed the glasses. Although the weather was quite chilly with strong winds, the patients left happy most with sunglasses as well as prescription glasses. Great job everyone!

-Margie Wilson

Chiropractic

Climbing in that Cessna, heading to San Quintin, Mexico, brought back wonderful memories of past trips and a reminder of how much I enjoy it. I'm always surrounded by great, dedicated folks that you're proud to be a part of.

Practicing Chiropractic here in Folsom, I've managed to simplify as much as possible, which works for my little operation. In San Quintin, it gets even more basic, which I love. I take their health concerns very seriously (often a variety of strains and sprains from manual labor), yet find myself laughing throughout the day, often because I'm pathetic at speaking their language. Somehow it all works as I saw between 40-50 patients on Saturday. Funny how exhaustion can feel so good.

Speaking for myself; making this trip and getting a periodic dose of reality, causes the gratitude to flow when I get home. Boundaries and borders may be necessary, but interacting with people at this level, makes it all kind of silly.

It's a wonderful weekend, with great memories, that I look forward to more of this year.

Thanks again!

-James Padgett, DC



Jim Padgett examines a patient

Dental Clinic



WE ARE OPEN!! DENTAL IS BACK!! After closure for two years due to Covid, the dental clinic in San Quintin hosted its first clinic on April 9th. It was good to be back. Our local coordinator Cecilia Castro had the dental clinic in an amazing, clean and organized condition. Thank you Cecilia! We had a full dental team ready to serve the many patients that awaited our return. We were happy to have Dr. Rob Berrin at our reopening. Rob managed the majority of the extractions and tackled our most challenging cases. Now retired, we hope to see Rob more at the clinic to keep his surgical skills sharp. Our new

surgical assistant is our new pilot Peter Gordon. Peter was quick to learn the surgical instruments and the worked side by side with Rob. In the few minutes between patients, Peter also managed to be lead volunteer in sterilization. We were grateful to have Peter on our dental team. We hope he will join us again soon. We saw a record number of cleanings this weekend. Lead by our returning volunteer hygienist Leslie Randall, we were able to accommodate 20 patients for cleanings and fluoride treatment. Leslie was a scaling machine all without working with a Cavitron. She definitely earned that large Pina Colada at dinner. We are looking forward to seeing her back later this year. Dr. Giang Chu, one of our most consistent volunteers in the past several years does it all for us. She is our resident pedodontist and general dentist. She has a special ability to work with our younger patients to provide the treatment needed. Giang was assisted by another pilot and returning volunteer Julius Chang. Having worked in the dental clinic on previous missions, Julius was a big help to Giang while working on the scared young patients. One little boy was screaming and uncooperative. To help encourage the boy to be cooperative, Julius offered to show the boy a real airplane. This seemed to work as the extraction went without a whimper. Great job Julius. Last but not least was our new local helper Max. This was his very first clinic. He worked as our translator. Max worked well with the dentists and patients. We hope he will become a regular volunteer at the clinic.

Unfortunately the compressor crashed in the later morning so we were limited on the number of operative procedures that could be provided. But we were able to provide cleanings to all the patients that needed fillings. We hope to get the compressor up and running for the clinic in May. My goal is to have a clinic at least every other month. I hope to have a digital x-ray system available by the summer as well as a Cavitron unit. Even after two years of sitting idle, all the dental units are functioning. New highspeed and slow speed handpieces were available Pre-Covid. I hope to see our previous dental volunteers back at the clinic to help provide the much needed dental care for the people of San Quintin. For all dentists and hygienist, when registering for a clinic a copy of a current license and/or dental diploma or hygiene certificate is required. There is a tab to upload this document. anticipate more patients will return to the dental clinic each month. We need more volunteers. Dentists and hygienists, please spread the word among your friends and colleagues.



Thank you Rob, Peter, Leslie, Giang and Julius for making our first clinic in two year a success.

-Charlie Arita
Dental Coordinator

The people of San Quintín need us and support us



The patients treated by Flying Samaritans Mother Lodi Chapter at the Alma Luminosa Clinic in San Quintín have crucial health needs, and the volunteers from San Quintín are our biggest supporters.

Flying Sams recently resumed its monthly flights to staff the Alma Luminosa Clinic. The name means “shining soul” is Spanish. It is located at the sprawling Los Pinos ranch, the largest agricultural enterprise in Baja California, according to Wikipedia. The aging blue-green stucco buildings sit amid a sea of shade structures covered with malla, brown nylon netting that shades early season vegetables from the intense desert sun.

Our pilots use the private Los Pinos Airport near San Quintín which lies 10 miles north on the Pacific coast. Doug Wirzberger, president of the Flying Sam’s Mother Lode chapter, thought our readers would like to know something about the needs and lives of our patients and also meet some of the people in San Quintín who make the clinic possible. Below are stories of the people I met when I flew down to the November 13 clinic.

Gabriela Camarillo Ramirez, 65, was born in Mexicali and worked in Southern California for a while. But she ended up at Los Pinos packing tomatoes and cucumbers and planting lettuce and strawberries for export to San Diego, Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. The work had her standing 12 hours a day, six days a week. When she developed diabetes, the foot pain forced her to quit. She has a small pension, still works at a store and cares for her 92-year-old mother.

They live with Gabriela’s brother and sister in a one-story cinder-block house with one bathroom and a small kitchen. Her sister works in a store in San Quintín; her brother herds goats and sheep. She has been coming to Alma Luminosa Clinic for 13 years to get help with her eyes and to receive medicine to control her diabetes. She has received free glasses and a referral that allowed her to receive care through Mexico’s Social Security System. Thanks to a diagnosis she received at Alma Luminosa she recently receive laser eye surgery in Tijuana, four hours away.

“I’m happy to have the service. Everyone is very professional,” she said. Marco Antonio Nocelotl Merino, 33, arrived at Los Pinos a month ago, travelling from the southern Mexican state of Puebla with his wife and 3-year-old son. In Cholula, Pue., he earned \$8.64 per day, for a 12-hour day. In Los Pinos he earns half again as much — \$13.20 per day — working in the structure where workers recycle the worn nylon netting, damaged wooden posts and motor oil used by the ranch’s huge truck fleet.

He came for a free pair of eye glasses to correct his myopia. Alma Luminosa Clinic, he said, “is a real help.”

Estela Mendoza Ruiz, a woman in her 60s, also came to the clinic for new glasses. Her job at Los Pinos is grafting various tomato varieties onto disease-resistant root stock.



The people of San Quintín need us and support us



Manuela Carmen Quiróz Jimenez plants tomatoes and cucumbers in outdoor fields at nearby Rancho San Marcos. The constant sunshine has afflicted her eyes with pterygium, which causes an opaque growth on the side of each eye. She was diagnosed by Flying Sams optometrist John Demshar who said in a year or so the growth will start to cover her iris and become inoperable. In that time, he hopes to find the laser surgical equipment to remove the growth and halt its threat to her vision.

When Uriel Flores Simón, 22, began telling me about his life, he seemed like one of Mexico's fortunate sons. He recently graduated from the Autonomous University of Guerrero near Acapulco with a degree in agronomy. During his time in college, he published a paper on a disease that afflicts blue agave, the plant from which tequila is made.

But after graduation he was unable to find professional work in agriculture. He said his father's family back in Guerrero has land planted in coffee. His mother's family has land from which they harvest peaches, pears and cumquats. Sadly, his mother and father recently divorced and there was no gainful employment available from either family. So Uriel and his mother are picking tomatoes in the vast shaded structures at Los Pinos.

He came to Alma Luminosa Clinic for help with pain in his knees and myopia. He has a university degree, published a scientific paper, speaks three languages and is unable to afford a pair of glasses.

These are just some of the 80 or so patients seen at Alma Luminosa on November 12. If we had been able to open the dental clinic, we would have seen twice as many patients. That's the judgment of Cecilia Castro Rueda. She is local clinic coordinator responsible for keeping the community apprised of the Flying Sams clinic dates and services via the Internet, local radio and posted fliers. She and other volunteers prepare the clinic for the monthly arrival of doctors, nurses and other health professionals from California. She keeps President Doug and other Flying Sams leaders apprised of needed maintenance and developments on the ranch.

On clinic days, she and others scurry to supply American doctors, nurses and technicians with medicine, equipment and anything else they need to treat patients.

According to Doug, it takes five to seven adult volunteers from Mexico to run a clinic and about six young volunteers ages 12 to 17. Cecilia has been volunteering at our monthly clinics for about seven years. She is one of four local volunteers whose English skills are essential to good patient-caregiver communications. She lived 30 years in Phoenix but now lives nearby the clinic in Ejido Nuevo Mexicali. She is an "ama de casa" — the Spanish term for housewife and translated literally, it means "one who loves her home." She has two grown children and a son and daughter still at home. Her husband is a mobile auto mechanic, taking his services to clients all over the San Quintín area.

Although she has no training as a health profession she volunteers at the clinic "...because I like to help people." Imelda Rivera Hernandez and her niece Maria José Romero were in charge of greeting patients on November 12. Imelda comes to Alma Luminosa every month that the Flying Samaritans open the clinic. She has volunteered there for 22 years.

The people of San Quintín need us and support us

"It's a way of showing gratitude for what I have," she said. Imelda has two daughters 17 and 10, and a son who is 7. Her husband is an administrator at a nearby quarry that mines gravel and other building materials.

Imelda is acutely aware of the need for good health care in the San Quintín area. Her father recently died of complications of diabetes at the age of 67 and she has signs of the disease.

The Mother Lode Flying Sams has been putting on clinics in San Quintín since 1977. I asked Cecilia where local patients would go if they didn't have the services offered by Flying Samaritans.

"They would have to rely on Social Security," Mexico's meager equivalent to American Social Security and Medicare. Or they would have to pay for services at a local pharmacy and the privately owned Hospital Buen Pastor. That hospital does some free service and often cooperates with Flying Sams, but can't begin to meet the charitable needs of the large community.

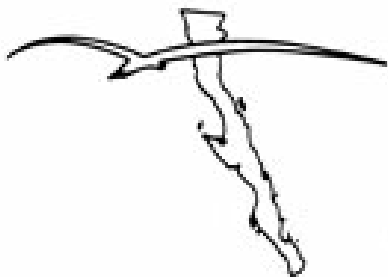
Patients, Cecilia said, are especially grateful for free dental services at our clinic because "dental service is very expensive in Mexico. People come here from many other states (for dental service)."

Once a month, volunteers from north and south of the border cooperate to make a big impact in a big place.

-Marty Weybret



Dr. John and Manuela Carmen



Flying Samaritans®

SAMARITANOS VOLADORES

San Quintín gives high priority to COVID vaccination

Editor's note: This article was originally written after the November, 2021 clinic.

When I first heard that 90 percent of people in the municipality of San Quintín have been vaccinated against COVID-19, I admit— I was skeptical.

Comparisons are hard to make, but according to CNN quoting Our World Data, on November 17, 57.7 percent of Americans were fully vaccinated while 48.7 percent of Mexicans were fully vaccinated. My online source didn't say what the ages for vaccination are in each country, but I presume these percentages apply to the total population of each country.

And I presume the "90 percent" figure for San Quintín applies only to those eligible for their vaccination program — residents over 18.

But if the claim I heard is true, it appears the San Quintín municipal government has done a great job vaccinating its citizens against COVID-19.

Cecilia Castro Rueda, local coordinator for the Alma Luminosa Clinic, gave me some of the details:

In June, the municipal government organized a mass vaccination event at the local army base. The first week, citizens over 50 stayed in their cars as they drove through the base and received injections of Pfizer vaccine. The following week, the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine was given to those 40 to 49. During the third week those 18 to 39 also got J&J vaccine. Then during the fourth week, the oldest group went through again for their second dose of Pfizer vaccine.

In less than a month, almost every adult in the community of 25,000 was vaccinated.

I couldn't help myself, I had to check.

As I interviewed patients and Mexican volunteers for this article, I informally asked 16 people if they were vaccinated. Thirteen said "yes" and nearly all of those had gone to the army base for their shots. Of the three Alma Luminosa patients who said they hadn't been vaccinated, two had arrived in San Quintín since June and didn't know there was a clinic downtown where they could receive free vaccination. The other said she had trouble rearranging her work and child care schedule.

Nevertheless, my crude poll shows a vaccination rate of 81 percent of the adults I stumbled across on this one random day. That seems like a much higher vaccination rate than California's Central Valley.

On Nov. 5, San Joaquin County was 55.4 per cent fully vaccinated; Sutter County was at 53.9; and Stanislaus County was at 51.6, according to data compiled by LATimes.com. But in California, vaccination is available down to age 12. Looking at age breakdowns from the 2020 Census I guesstimated San Joaquin's 0-11 population at 16.9% of total population. If that's roughly accurate, it would appear the vaccination rate among San Joaquin County residents age 12 and older is about 66.7%. Could it be higher just among people 18 and older?

(Maybe a better question would be: What do you get when a news writer fiddles with statistics? The term "fake news" comes to mind. But, hey, I tried. You judge.)

Anyway, I didn't speak to anyone at the clinic who expressed fear of COVID-19 vaccines and Cecilia confirmed she doesn't hear a lot of skepticism or conspiracy theories about vaccination in the San Quintín community.

On November 18, she received a public announcement from Baja California Health Secretary J. Adrián Medina Amarillas, saying the state has received 45,000 doses of Pfizer vaccine and San Quintín has been allocated 1,300 doses for teenagers.

"Fortunately, Baja California always sets the standard," said Medina Amarillas. "And thanks to the good vaccination coverage, we have for the moment this batch that will serve to start with our 15- to 17-year-old youngsters."

Cecilia also said the school system will soon begin vaccinating students 12 to 17 years old, using the Astra Zeneca vaccine.

Flying Samaritans is just one part of a hard-working health care system in this part of Mexico.

-Marty Weybret