BBF Staff and Trustees Evaluate Work in Puerto Rico

By Neil Walker

Between Sunday, May 19th and Thursday, May 23rd, 2019, BBF staff and Board members visited Puerto Rico to assess progress on multiple projects. Traveling in the group were Board Chair Phil Jones, Advisory Trustee Robert Mongino, President Ozzy Samad, Director of Development Laura Kelly and Director of Program Development & Evaluation Neal Walker.

On Monday the 20th, the BBF team met with the Manager and SVP of Drogueira Betances, Samuel Sierra. Samuel took the team to see two school reconstruction projects that are being funded through BBF’s Puerto Rico humanitarian response. The first of these is República de Costa Rica Vocational School, a facility located in Caguas, Puerto Rico. There was significant improvement since the 2018 trip to the school by BBF representatives. BBF representatives interacted with both students and faculty and were able to see firsthand the positive impact of our donations. The second school visited is Margarita Rivera de Janer in Gurabo, Puerto Rico. BBF will be funding the construction of two playgrounds designed for special needs children there. The BBF representatives were shown the location where the playgrounds are to be built. The need for the playgrounds, and the impact they will have on the challenged children, was clearly described by the principal and staff and made readily apparent to the visitors.

Following the morning visits, BBF representatives traveled to Luis Garratón, LLC (LGI) to see company President Raúl Rodríguez, Manager & SVP Orlando Pinar and others on the LGI team. There, the BBF visitors were given presentations on two new proposed projects that LGI is undertaking and asked for the Foundation’s participation. This was followed by a site visit to Agustín Stahl High School.

There were substantial improvements to two buildings, including one that was deemed too dangerous to enter during BBF’s August 2018 visit. Another main building with major damage to the roof was still in the same condition, awaiting funding for rehabilitation from FEMA. The building is designated as a historical site and, as such, is bound by restrictions as to renovations.

On Tuesday the 21st, BBF representatives visited with the Director and staff of San Juan Municipal Hospital to see how the two large sterilizers we donated are being utilized.

Regrettably, there were unexpected issues with voltage compatibility, and a step-down converter was in the process of being installed so that the autoclaves could be used. There was a drastic difference between the new autoclaves and the dangerously deplorable condition of the old ones that had been removed. This was clearly evident upon visual inspection.

On Wednesday the 22nd, the BBF team drove to Ponce to meet with the Ponce Medical Foundation (PMF) staff. PMF has been assisting BBF in the distribution of donated medical equipment and supplies and has also been overseeing the installation of solar panels at outlying clinics and hospitals. Dr. Laura Domenech, from Ponce Medical Foundation, accompanied BBF representatives on a tour of a vaccine clinic in Ponce and then to the CDT Jayuya - a clinic in the mountainous central part of the island. This was the site of the first solar installation BBF funded. There was significant improvement in the facility from the August 2018 trip made by BBF. The location also has equipment and supplies that were sent by BBF.

The morning of Thursday the 23rd was spent in Loiza, where BBF representatives were met by representatives of the municipality, including the mayor of the town. Following this visit, a member of the Loiza Municipality staff took BBF representatives to visit an HIV/AIDS clinic Loiza is hoping to have funded with solar backups. The site also serves as a women’s shelter. The final stop before leaving for the airport was to a former school campus that is being proposed as a facility for the airport was to a former school campus that is being proposed as

The academic laboratory of Drogueira Betances, one of BBF’s partners in Puerto Rico. Drogueira Betances works with a local university, lending use of this space for some of the university’s classes.

Countries and Territories Served in 2019

In the first six months of 2019, BBF shipped requested supplies to 58 countries and territories including Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Malawi, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Romania, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Tonga, Uganda, Ukraine, USA, Venezuela, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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Incorporating Solar Energy to Reduce BBF’s Overhead Costs

by Ozzy Samad with Neal Walker

Beginning this fall, BBF’s goal is to incorporate an alternative energy solution - solar power - into our daily operations. Solar power is a renewable energy source, which means that once the system is installed, fuel utilized as energy from the sun, is virtually cost free. There is, of course, some maintenance of the equipment that is required, as the energy is used to power BBF’s warehouses and office operations. This means that there will be a significant savings on power costs for BBF throughout the year and, in addition, that we will have more flexibility in distributing resources to where they are critically needed.

As part of this initiative, Neal Walker, BBF’s Director of Program Development & Evaluation, has requested quotes from several local solar equipment vendors. This competitive process will have ensured that we are receiving the maximum value for our investment. The vendor that we will select will take charge of the engineering, design and construction of a solar installation system on the roofs of BBF’s Galveston and Behan buildings in Pittsburgh. In addition, one of our core values is strengthening the region we live in; therefore, system components will be locally sourced. We believe this will be a positive example for the community and an educational tool for our volunteers and partners.

Improving access to clean energy is an important part of the work we undertake in developing countries. By encouraging sustainable living practices both locally and abroad, we hope to improve air quality and contribute to improved health around the world. The solar panel installation on our building will, by itself, avoid the production of 150 tons of carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions into the atmosphere over the life span of the project. Furthermore, based on current economic remodeling of the social and environmental costs of a ton of CO2 released into the atmosphere, that means that BBF will save the community $222,000 over the duration of the installation. A sincere thank you to Chip Pickering, from Pickering Energy Solutions, for spearheading this project and articulating its benefits!
BBF-Supported Hand-Carry Medical Trips

Love Your Neighbor Rescue Mission in Pankshin, Nigeria

The Florida-based Love Your Neighbor Rescue Mission team recently traveled to the Pankshin General Hospital in Pankshin, Nigeria, a six-hour drive from the nation's capital Abuja. BBF supplied 549 bottles of medication and more than 200 pounds of basic medical supplies to this effort. The team provided a wide range of services such as eye care to 2,843 patients, including 438 corrective surgeries, 3,201 dental procedures, 8,876 laboratory tests; and a total of 289 life-saving surgical operations ranging from lumpectomies to hysterectomies and caesarean sections.

This was far from the team’s first trip to the area. Team members reported that as their bus arrived, they were greeted by a crowd of thousands. Some patients traveled significant distances in hopes of being among those treated. Over the time of its stay, the team of nearly 300 was able to provide care to more than 13,000 patients. This is one of the larger hand-carry medical efforts that BBF supports, and we’re happy to support the team’s hard work.

Maryland Ear, Nose & Throat Abroad (MENTA) in Kampala, Uganda

The MENTA team traveled to Kampala, Uganda, partnering with the Galilee Community General Hospital to bring ear, nose and throat (ENT) services to the surrounding areas. The team consisted of surgeons, nurses, surgical technicians, nurse anesthetists, a speech language pathologist and a surgical coordinator.

With the supplies and support from Brothers Brother Foundation, MENTA was able to serve 110 clinic patients and provide surgery for sixteen of those patients. Some patients traveled up to a day to reach the hospital for treatment. Patient diagnoses ranged from sinusitis, ear infections and tonsillitis to surgical diagnoses such as head and neck masses.

Teams like MENTA provide invaluable services, bringing much needed experienced aid to overworked hospitals and clinics.

Seeing Again Guatemala

We want to extend our sincere appreciation for your efforts and coordination to help supply our recent medical mission trip to Guatemala. Please also extend our thanks to your colleagues and the entire Brother's Brother Foundation organization; without your support the trip would not have been possible!

During the week-long mission, we saw about 230 patients in the clinic and operated on about 42 patients, the majority for severe cataract. Once again, thanks to you and yours for the loyal support and we look forward to the opportunity to help others again on future medical mission trips with your assistance.

BBF’s Mission Trip Program in 2019

In the first six months of 2019, BBF supplied medical supplies and pharmaceuticals to 162 medical mission trips to 48 countries.
Highmark Volunteers

A huge thank you goes out to Highmark’s Corporate Caring Team for spending an afternoon with us in June. The fantastic team helped prepare sutures for hand-carry trips, sort surgical instruments for hospitals around the globe and prepare medical supplies for future shipments.

Highmark’s continued dedication to BBF’s efforts in global and disaster response is a tribute to its caring for the community.

Combined Federal Campaign

BBF’s new Combined Federal Campaign number is 12228

Brother’s Brother Foundation is pleased to announce that financial support from federal employees continues. Many thanks to both our new and renewing CFC donors. BBF is a member of Charity Without Borders, America’s federation of emergency relief, development and humanitarian outreach charities. Look for BBF in the fall 2019 campaign brochure. For donors who are not government employees, please remember that some employers match individual donations. Ask about your employer’s matching gifts program. This is a great way to give to BBF. Thank you!