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Mending Faces return from mission to the Philippines

By Mary Jeneverre Schultz | Asian Avenue magazine

Denver-based Mending Faces aims to provide free surgical correction for impoverished children in “developing world” countries inflicted with cleft lip and cleft palates, who otherwise would not have a chance for surgery.

The nonprofit organization recently returned from its annual trip, an estimated 14-hour flight from Denver to the Philippines, one way.

“Mending Faces is unique in delivering surgical care to the needy children in the Philippines,” said Dr. David M. Charles in a fundraising brochure about Mending Faces.

Each trip includes a team of 50 medical professionals, comprised of nurses, anesthesiologists, surgeons, speech therapists and outreach specialists.

“The missionaries typically spend around \$2,000 to participate in the mission,” said Jay LaVigne, Esq, one of the main organizers of Mending Faces annual missionary trips. “With very limited exceptions, each missionary is responsible for their own fare and expenses.”

Planning for 2014 missionary activities started a year before the scheduled trip. Back in February 2014, the missionary team headed to the provincial hospital in Calibo, located on the island of Panay and estimated to be one hour south of Manila by air.

The team included 49 volunteer members:

- Six surgeons
- Five anesthesiologist
- One pediatrician
- One dentist
- Two speech therapists
- Seventeen nurses and surgical assistants
- One bio medical technical



Mending Faces Secretary Donna LaVigne discusses missionary activities with Chairman Dr. David Charles and Aklan's governor.

- Fifteen administrative and outreach volunteer
- One county liaison

The organization estimated the value of services rendered to be about \$750,000. As a combined effort, all missionaries donated about \$90,000 in travel and living expenses, while direct mission expenses were about \$50,000.

Throughout the year, Mending Faces organizes fundraisers to defray the steep costs of these missionary efforts. On August 2, the fifth annual Rib-Rub-Off will showcase a silent auction, classic car expo, kids water slide and yard games at 9329 Gunbarrel Ridge Road in Boulder. All proceeds go to the children of the Philippines in desperate need of facial reconstructive surgeries.

Visit their website for more information at www.mendingfaces.org. Follow Mary Jeneverre on Twitter @Jeneverre.



Above: The surgical team photographs two-year-old Kyra before /after the facial surgery reconstruction. Left: Patients wait for screening and receive a toy donated by Denver-based organization, Toys for God's Kids.