

# GUATEMALAN MISSION UPDATE

## Year in Review

In November of 2016, Parishioners **Ellen Miller, RN, Brian Regan, Tony Fernandez, and Maura O'Connor** participated in another successful mission with **Helping Hands Medical Missions** to Santa Maria de Jesus in Guatemala. Over the course of five days, the medical staff treated and managed care for over **2,000 patients**.



Our Water Filter team, including a representative of EcoFiltro and Parishioner, Maura O'Connor, **distributed 320 filters** during our five clinical days. We educated local families on the importance of clean drinking water and emphasized the proper use and care of these new filters to maximize their longevity. Our 2016 family census indicates our filter distribution this year directly affected the lives of **approximately 2,000 people**.



EcoFiltro was distributed rather than Sawyer Water Filters. We like this product because it has less moving parts and is produced by a Guatemalan who supports our mission. In addition, EcoFiltro is owned by a Guatemalan who supports our mission. This year the **bulk cost was \$35 per filter** compared to our **2015 price of \$47 per filter**.

Following the suggestion of EcoFiltro, we charged a **nominal fee** of 20Q or **\$3 USD** for each filter. The charge was well received and we expect it will help instill a sense of pride of ownership by the filter recipients. The fees collected were used by our clinical team during the week to defray medical and living expenses for our patients, to offer assistance to families who were unable to pay this fee, and the balance was donated back to the local Catholic school.

## Walk for Water 2016

Our ability to purchase these filters was made possible this year through the generosity of **Saint Mary Parish and the people of Ridgefield, CT**. Our 2016 *Walk for Water* in Ridgefield raised over **\$17,000** in support of our cause. The total cost for the 2016 SMdJ water filter project was **\$13,200**. Excess funds of **\$3,800** were held at Saint Mary Church in Ridgefield for future missions to Guatemala and a permanent water solution for the community.



## Goals for 2017

In addition to providing every household with a water filtration system, we hope to assist the local Catholic School, Angelitos de Dios, with physical plant needs (including sinks, tiling, water pump) as well as provide scholarships of \$60 each to help 73 children attend. Many five year olds are unsupervised while their parents work in the fields for a mere \$4 per day, and the school is providing a kindergarten program for these children. Once again, we see **a focus on education** as the key to improving the lives of the residents of Santa Maria de Jesus. In addition, since most families only have running water from the town tap, which is available for only 30 minutes every other day, we are working toward building a water catchment system, which will provide drinking water to the village every day. On **September 30** we will sponsor a **Guatemalan Fiesta to raise funds for these initiatives**. Please consider supporting this event and these worthy causes. The Holy Spirit is working through our Parishioners to reach out to our brothers and sisters in Christ in this village.

