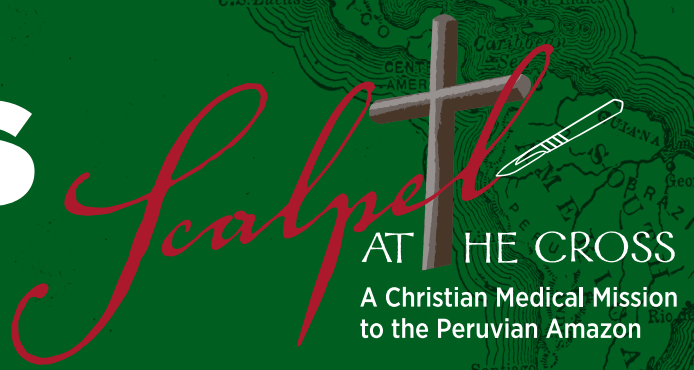


SCALPEL'S EDGE



A GIFT OF LIGHT, HOPE AND SURGERY TO PERU

FALL 2018 | ISSUE 26

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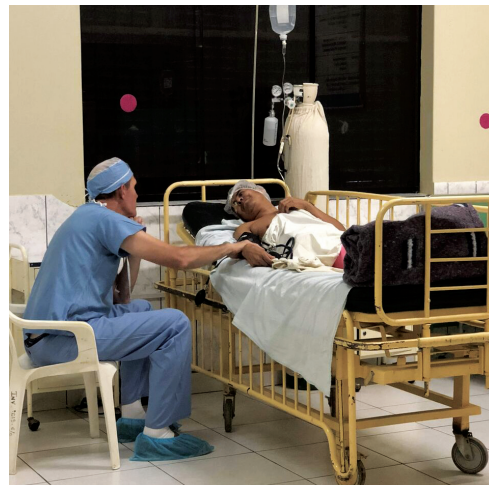
“ To be a lighthouse for Christ through a medical ministry in the Peruvian Amazon. ”

—Peter A. Cole, MD



THANKSGIVING TWO-THOUSAND AND EIGHTEEN REFLECTIONS

by Peter A. Cole, M.D. - President, Scalpel At The Cross



Scalpel At The Cross is coming up on its 15th anniversary soon, and to date, I believe 2018 is the most significant year in our history. For fourteen years we were content to nurture a model of three annual short-term mission teams, focusing on Orthopedic Surgery during ten-day trips, and the follow-up on those patients. We sought not to grow large as a mission organization, but rather to seek God for guidance on incremental changes to improve our patient care.

Such incremental milestones included establishing a Board of Directors and a part-time stateside staff to organize activities and plan trips. We added some facilities on our campus in the jungle to accommodate larger teams, store equipment and see patients. Soon thereafter we started The Scalpel's Edge news publica-

tion and a website which has expanded to an integrated social media platform. We then hired a Peruvian physician to follow our patients after surgery and subsequently created a patient outcomes program. After publishing our surgical outcomes and model, we built an electronic medical record to be able to track patients better, decrease duplicative work, and improve surgical planning and follow-up. We redefined criteria for Board Membership, developed a statement of faith for the ministry, added members, and began working on the faith-core of our leadership team. We added staff on the Peruvian side to promote a year-round presence and began emphasizing the healing of hearts for Peruvians and Americans through our mercy ministry of orthopedic surgery. We began new techniques for the education of local health professionals and initiated micro-economic seeding through healthcare initiatives.

In the first decade, we matured from a primary relief organization to a developmental organization as relationships with the local church, hospital leaders and other Peruvian mission organizations began to grow. All along we stayed true to our Mission and Vision, and we made all decisions through these filters. I believe this approach has helped us to stay focused on the main thing (medical care of patients) and The Main Thing (changing lives through transforming hearts). There exist hundreds of examples to support this claim and you have read of many here in The Scalpel's Edge. I have been turned inside out witnessing what God has done through this modest ministry

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THANKSGIVING



THE VISION

To be a lighthouse for Christ through a medical ministry in the Peruvian Amazon.

THE MISSION

Build a medical mission camp which serves orthopedic needs of Pucallpan Peruvians, tribal populations and the missionaries who serve them.

Staff such a camp with full-time Peruvian and part-time North American health care professionals.

Serve as a lighthouse for Christ and a magnifying glass to God.

while experiencing healthy fear and disarming humility considering next steps. Before summarizing some of the events of this past year, I want to take us back to the Mission and Vision we established before all of this began.

The point of this essay is to highlight for you that I believe we have accomplished the Vision; I might add, with your mighty help through steadfast prayer and sacrificial giving. Whereas I believe our mission statement is ever appropriate as an original, documental guidepost, the vision statement needs to be recrafted. I am not saying that our vision is outdated and no longer relevant; rather, simply that it has been fulfilled and may serve as an excellent starting point for a new 10-year vision.

Why do I come to this conclusion now? I do not recall a year in which we experienced such an accelerated pace for change. Beginning with our Boston board meeting in April, there was a hunger for growth on the part of leadership members like I had not witnessed previously. No longer did we simply meet to talk about how we can accomplish what we do better. Ideas began to get large as our leaders slung challenges which ignited propositions which stimulated counterproposals, and the group could hardly be bridled! The sentiment was coupled with the overwhelming conclusion that the responsibilities of managing the home office were beyond the capacity of a part-time director position. Recognition of this fact spun into the obvious consequence of requiring greater financial means to run activities and grow the mission.

In the following five months since Boston, our director rearranged priorities at the home office and rewrote responsibilities for a new position, Scalpel Communications Coordinator. A new member of the staff was hired half-time, Danielle Ellerbe, RN, who will help lead major new initiatives which you will hear about in our Spring Issue of Scalpel's Edge. We successfully deployed a massive container to Peru through the dogged determination of Lisa Schroder, MBA, our former mission director—a transformational milestone and gift for our host Hospital Amazónico. A strategic consulting arrangement was established with Stewardship Planning Partners to help us with fundraising and development. Perhaps most interesting at this time is the fact that Scalpel At The Cross has been approached for the possibility of a land acquisition to further our healthcare ministry in Pucallpa, Peru. From such a transaction, a new strategic alliance could evolve potentially to build a hospital.

These are the new matters about which the Scalpel At the Cross team is praying, and to which I appeal to you for the same. These are terribly exciting times and we look to you for help. God's providence has manifested so many vivid times before and even not so vividly, to make the magic of jungle healthcare we know today. I am grateful to each of you and indebted for the support in all the various forms which has brought us to the end of another year, waiting on God, reflecting on two thousand and eighteen... memories, thoughts, and new dreams. †

CONTAINER OPERATION

By Laines Scharff

We had set to meet in Tottus on the second floor around 10:30 a.m. Due to prior engagements and several other reasons, we had been unable to meet until now. Yet, here we sat face to face. That's when Daniel Porch told me, "If you agree, then we can begin the project of donating the container to Hospital Amazonico of Yarinacocha, Pucallpa, Peru."

Undoubtedly, in that moment I had no idea everything that would be required of me to accept this challenge. I meditated for a moment, perhaps bringing up past memories of a failed attempt of bringing a container filled with beautiful objects to the hospital in Pucallpa. Having lost it dominated my thoughts. After a brief pause I said "yes, let's proceed." Immediately, a sense of peace overwhelmed me. A feeling that only the Holy Spirit can provide, it was a sensation of elation during which my feet did not feel firm on the ground.

This is how it all began. I heard the whisper of God saying, "Very good, little lawyer. Now you will know what it means to truly work with me." Surely I am not the only one who shared this sentiment; I am confident my sister in Christ Lisa Schroeder, Dr. Romero, and Dr. Hunter felt the same way.

I dare say that pretty much the only contact with the States during this process was my sister in Christ, Lisa Schroeder. Despite the language barrier, she supported me through all my ineptitude and doubt. She shared the word of the Lord with me every opportunity she got, making me feel like we spoke the same language.

Later, Mr. Alejandro Peñarrieta (customs agent) was one of the first Peruvians with whom I felt a connection in this project. He asked me if I'd done this before and I responded, "Yes, but not as directly as this time around. Five years ago we failed and lost the container." I noticed a slight smile on his face, as if he was filled with compassion for me. You see, it is never the customs agent or the lawyer who lose; it is the donor or client that do.



When the container arrived in Peru on April 22, the errands continued here and there. The intricacies of every challenge forced me to get to know Dr. Hunter quite well. We had to meet constantly in her office and I think that God allowed these meetings to continue for a reason. I was able to feel the love of God through her. I believe that before, as a "good Catholic," she had a mediocre disposition for Christian pastors. With time, however, she told me she felt very comfortable with me because I always shared the word of God with

her. She didn't realize I was not only a lawyer but a pastor as well until later on. I can say with certainty she thought to herself, "Dr. Hunter helping and constantly talking with a Christian Pastor, I can't believe it!" Glory be to God.

Several problems and circumstances arose along the way that worried Dr. Hunter and she didn't know how to help.

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OPERATION CONTAINER

Prompt Meeting with the President of the Republic of Peru.

There we were, in the office of Dr. Romero within Hospital Amazonico, contemplating how we could accomplish meeting with the Minister of Health. We knew that the President of Peru would arrive that morning with an entourage of his ministers and that he would hold a session with the municipal leaders of the providence of Pucallpa. An hour passed and nothing happened. Two hours passed and still nothing. Dr. Romero was trying to reach the Minister of Health through his contacts in the Presidential Region. Boldly, I told Dr. Romero I was going to ask for an interview with the president in person. I left for the Municipal building and when I was about to arrive I had to park my car three blocks away from it. I noticed that the city was sectioned off by police and the president's personal security. I reached the first check point and told them I had some urgent documents for the president. I showed them a folder I had brought with me that contained documents and pictures. They let me pass, and in the second checkpoint the same thing happened. By the third checkpoint I had reached high ranking officials, and unfortunately, they would not let me pass. However, the official told me that if I waited he could get me a few seconds with the president. He positioned me strategically where he knew the president would pass. I waited two hours and then I heard the screaming of the people in front of me who were trying to get close to the president. True to his word, the official opened a path for me to be within a few feet of the president. In that moment I shouted, "MR. PRESIDENT, MR. PRESIDENT!" I felt like blind Bartholomew from the gospel of Mark. He turned to me. I had a couple of seconds to spill everything out. I handed him the folder with all the documents about the container (copies, of course). I asked him for help.

Days passed and nothing happened. During these days I felt that God was speaking to me through the word of Zechariah 4:6, "...not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit." Might I add, "nor by the president's power." So I thought to myself, "Yes, Lord it is well, I will press on."



Our project continued with the help of Dr. Romero and the strength and patience that only comes from the providential Father. The one and only King of Kings granted me that which I lacked. I was tired of visiting offices and spending countless hours in meetings with different officers within the Ministry of Health. At the end of each day I would go to the place where I was staying in Lima after the meetings drained and with the desire to cry. That's right, a grown man crying. I called my wife who was in Pucallpa and when she realized the state I was in, she didn't console me or feel pity for me. She told me to stop crying and get some rest, tomorrow was a new day and to not tire myself even more.

The next day I went to the Peruvian Congress, searching for a contact from a congressman for the Region of Ucayali. It was all in vain, I bounced from here to there with no result. In one of the offices a secretary had compassion for me and she called me over to point me in the direction of a friend of hers who worked with congressmen for the Ministry of Health. I went to her friend and it was there that with all my might I explained the case of the container to the official. I asked for a personal meeting with Dr. Cordova, the General Director of DIGEMID. She made a few calls and 15 minutes later she told me, "Dr. Cordova will wait for you in her office." I immediately knew that my boss, Jesus Christ, was directing my path. I left the building and caught a taxi, 40 minutes later I arrived.

It was a building of 25 floors and when I arrived I went to the receptionist. She directed me to the 14th floor, the receptionist there told me to take a seat and to wait. A few moments later, the kind receptionist guided me to a large room where there were nine women sitting in a rectangular table. There were four women on each side. The woman at the head of the table sat with her right leg, which was in a cast, resting on a chair by her side. She might have had some sort of fracture.

One of them firmly greeted me and asked how they could help. And so it began.

I approached them politely and opened with, "I feel strongly outnumbered and scared to be alone with nine women." I noticed a slight grin appear on their faces. I had accomplished something, I broke the ice. I motioned to the leg of the woman who sat at the head of the table. In a few words I explained Scalpel At The Cross and their mission. I reached over and presented the folder with all the documents and pictures of the container. I explained to her that someone in her situation might benefit from one of the boots in the container instead of a clunky cast. After I made my case, she made a few calls. She then told me, "tomorrow we will inspect the container with a doctor called Rosa and we are elevating this case to the top of the list with everything in the container." I felt like I was in heaven.

Since it was Thursday, I knew I would have to wait two days after the inspection before we would receive approval from the professional technicians of DIGEMID. I went back to Pucallpa when word came to me that I had to be present in the offices of Villa Oquendo. It was there that I was to process the paperwork so the container could begin its journey from Lima to Pucallpa; however, I had to authorize the detainment of two X-RAY machines. I was in a catch-22 and had to make a quick decision. It was there that I authorized the detainment of the machines so the process could continue. I thought to myself, "Let me get the rest of the equipment to Pucallpa and later I will worry about the X-RAY machines."

During this, my wife had to travel to Lima because of an emergency surgery. I was with her for support and while I was there, the last part of the story unraveled.

Two days before we were set to return to Pucallpa, I received a massive blow. I was told by the cus-

toms agent that we would have to pay 4,600 Soles (\$1,380 USD) in addition to the 18,400 Soles (\$5,516 USD) we had already paid. You would not imagine that the scream that resonated through the skies came from none other than our beloved sister in Christ, Lisa. Reasonably so, I was just as bewildered and had difficulty explaining to her why things were constantly changing. One thing was for sure, "THERE ISN'T A SINGLE DOLLAR LEFT, LAINES!" she explained.

That evening I decided to reach out to a good friend of mine who is an American pastor, Robert Barriger. I explained the situation we were in with the container. He told me, "Laines, a few years back we also lost a container." I finished the conversation extremely disheartened. That night I had to decide what to do because the following day we were set to return to Pucallpa. At 5am the next morning I began to pray as I always do. Admittedly, I don't know if I was praying or just crying. Either way, at around 6am I left the hotel with my bag and the notion that I would not return and instead meet my wife at the airport. I did plan a final effort to meet with the director of Villa Oquendo, although first I would go to the agent's office and then to where the container was located.

At around 7 in the morning I arrived at the office of the agent, but no one had arrived. I went to a park nearby to wait. It was a chilly morning and I was feeling lonely. I was wrestling with God, and on the brink of letting go of the container project. Images flashed through my mind of people without hospital beds to lay down on or without sheets to cover themselves within a typical hospital setting in Peru. I was moved to tears again and decided to press on. I waited two hours before I was able to speak to the agent. When I spoke to him, I begged him to take me to the offices of Villa Oquendo, but he told me it was impossible because he had too

many meetings. He had an employee drop me off at the bus stop.

The offices of Villa Oquendo are found in a place that is notorious for being in a bad neighborhood an difficult to get to. The main road to get there is filled with kids who use spark plugs to break car windshields. They do this in order to get you to stop so they can ambush and mug you. En route to the offices I got a call from Lisa. I told her that I would call her later but to please pray for me. The bus dropped me off at a toll bridge and I noticed that no one was crossing the bridge. I hesitated for a moment but began to cross anyway. Halfway through, I was overwhelmed with fear but I pressed on with the protection and help of our Lord, Jesus Christ. I safely reached the building where the offices were located. I went through security, followed all the protocols necessary to enter the building, and asked to see Jocelyn, the secretary to the directors of Villa Oquendo. I waited two hours but still nothing happened. They would not allow me to see her. I called the agent whom I had spoken to earlier and he was kind enough to give me Jocelyn's number. I was only able to do this after pleading with God that He would make the path clear to me and fight off the enemy's oppression. I thank God that she answered that morning and promised to come out for a few seconds to talk to me.

It felt like a total presentation for her. It was like being in front of a jury, trying to persuade her to be my associate in this project. However, she stood firm and said she could not grant me a meeting with the directors. I closed our conversation with, "either the container goes through with the paid deposit of 18,400 Soles or we lose the container... at this moment I have to go to the airport to meet with my wife and go back home." She left and said to wait patiently, that we would be in contact through WhatsApp. An hour passed without word. As I was about to leave the building I sent

her a message through WhatsApp to see if she had been able to help. She called me immediately and told me to check my email, there was a message saying they had given me a discount of 4,600 soles.

Still being in the environment of Villa Oquendo, I called the agent so that the discount would be verified. The agent told me that we had only received a discount equivalent to \$100 and nothing more. I then made this known to Miss Joselyn through a phone call and I sincerely thanked her attempt to help. She seemed very sad; nonetheless, we said our goodbyes cordially.

Something happened as I exited the offices of Villas Oquendo; I was not crying anymore. I had decided to let go of the container and now felt like a feather, light and happy to be seeing my wife soon. During the entire trajectory of leaving the offices of Villa Oquendo and taking a taxi to the airport I did not even remember the hostile and unsafe environment that is the external parts of the offices. I only remember being on my way to the airport with happiness in my heart, praising and blessing my Lord Jesus Christ with my entire being... when suddenly I get a message in WhatsApp from Miss Jocelyn that said word for word "Sr. Laines, I'm letting you know that my boss has accepted the deposit as payment so that you may make the withdrawal tomorrow. Confirm with Mr. Peñarrieta (the agent)."

In a summary of all that I wrote in response, I said "I think my boss (Jesus Christ) has told your boss 'do what Jocelyn says.' Shalom."

In this way my Container Operation story finishes, although that doesn't mean the Lord has finished working. In regards to this container, I think the Lord still has many wonderful surprises for us. ✝

DEREK EITREIM

THIS WAS MY FIRST TRIP TO PUCALLPA PERU. AS A BOARD MEMBER OF SCALPEL AT THE CROSS, I KNEW THE HISTORY, CHALLENGES, AND REMEDIES WE HOPED TO PROVIDE THE PATIENTS WE SERVED. THIS FARAWAY PLACE WAS FAMILIAR TO ME, ALBEIT, THROUGH OTHER PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES. EXPECTATIONS AND REALITIES SOMETIMES DON'T ALIGN IN LIFE. WHAT I FOUND AT THIS INTERSECTION WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN A BIT MORE ABOUT GOD, MYSELF AND THE PEOPLE WE SERVED. TWO MAJOR REFLECTIONS STICK WITH ME ABOUT THAT JULY TRIP.



1. ADAPTABLE

Being "adaptable" was a prominent theme of the week, and the exhortation brought with it ample opportunity for us to refine the discipline into our lives. A positive illustration of the attribute is demonstrated by our surgeon's (Drs. Cole, White, and Gellerman) creative abilities to use limited resources to bring a remedy to very technically challenging cases (imagine the blended skills of MASH's Hawkeye Pierce with MacGyver & Baer Grylls). For myself, adaptability is a weakness. My past career in orthopedic sales has nurtured a task-minded, driven, problem-solver approach coupled with a preference for clear expectations and control. From canceled flights to our truck dangerously positioned on the precipice of a culvert and the hospital's only sterilizer being broken which forced an entire day of surgery to be canceled, it would be fair to say the trip provided many opportunities to work on my weakness.

So, what do you do when your inclination to roll-up your sleeves and jump-in doesn't lead to the remedy you'd hoped for? What do you do when despite flying across the globe, offering prayers, and earnest pleas to the engineer - the sterilizer still doesn't work? Peter, Dani, and the other team members were exemplary in that moment as they looked for another opportunity to col-

laborate in a new faith-building moment to point people to Christ. This "wasted day" translated to a tour of the local university. We then were able to build relationships with future physicians at the medical school in a cadaver lab. Not to mention engage a classroom of students interested in becoming more conversational in their English. It was a divine appointment to watch Dani share her testimony and Margo display her amazing gift of teaching to help us engage this classroom of eager students - creating new relationships where it didn't previously exist. A beautiful illustration of how God chooses to use broken people and broken things for His greater glory.

2. IMPACT

As much as I was looking for a "Bucket List Adventure" in the trip to Peru, I was, more importantly, hoping to return home knowing our team had made an impact - that the result would yield a dividend for time and eternity. We were continuously reminded throughout the week of the extremes that separated our worlds - the abundance of the U.S. healthcare model, and severe limits of theirs. The week started out with our setting up a clinic where we treated about 80 patients and prayed with each of them. We had patients with arthritic joints, terrible deformities, infections, non-unions, and late-stage bone cancer. It was very humbling to be part of a team

carrying for patients, hoping to bring some remedy to their physical challenges and introduce Christ into the conversation. 7-year-old Santiago best illustrates the challenge for many of these people. Two years ago, he fractured his tibia when he fell out of a moto-taxi. Failing to secure proper treatment, he developed a terrible deformity and was no longer able to go to school. This family was put on a pathway with little hope. The heart of Scalpel At The Cross is to partner with Christ by offering hope in the form of free implants, surgery and introducing Christ as the ultimate Healer. Following surgery, Santiago now has a straight leg and is well on his way to getting back to school, normalizing his and his family's life. Through this experience, he has been introduced to the heart of the Gospel. In future trips, we will continue to follow up with this little guy and his family nurturing along his care.

This side of heaven there will always be a constant reminder of our brokenness and need. Pucallpa provided proof of this with more patients and need than our resources could bring the remedy for. Even so, I returned to the U.S. feeling like those we were able to operate on had the trajectory of their lives changed. I am very thankful for the chance to play a tiny role on this team of committed people with a heart to serve others and God. †

PRAISES & PRAYER



Being a Christ follower can be difficult. We wrestle with discouragement while trying to do good. We make appeals to the Great Physician while our bodies and strength give way. We fall into temptation and compromise despite what we know to be the truth. We struggle interpersonally and find ourselves in the messiness of relationship.

Even so, we relish growth and progressive sanctification that is found in pursuing God amidst this "hard." Following Jesus allows us to handle these challenges redemptively as we center on Him and cultivate fruits that are of Him: joy, peace, patience, self-control, faithfulness, gentleness, and love. The insanities of life are literally swallowed up by our great God as we enter His presence with a spirit of thanksgiving and humble dependence. Towards that end, please join us in:

-Praising the Almighty for the container of large hospital items which left the States last spring, having finally made it to their destination at Hospital Amazonico and been distributed by a small Scalpel Team early November. Other than two x-ray machines, all other contents cleared customs in Lima and eventually made their way through the narrow, circuitous Andes Mountain roads to Pucallpa.

-Praising God for the successful onboarding of part-time administrative staff, Esteban Cardona & Danielle Cole Ellerbe, who are making definitive marks in meeting the growth challenges of Scalpel in this season of its prolific development.

-Praising the Lord for moving our Scalpel Board & staff along the continuum of better understanding how to impact a developing country like Peru through our continued study of "When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor" by Corbett & Fikkert.

-Praying for the successful and expedient transfer of patient data from our former CrossCare Electronic Medical System to a new one promising fewer issues.

-Praying for the resourcing of opportunities Scalpel has going forward, including but not limited to potential property acquisition which might help mitigate ongoing squatter issues on the campus on which Junglebunks and our medical clinic reside.

-Praying for innovative and strategic fundraising endeavors as Scalpel seeks to meet what we sometimes sense to be an overwhelming need with a Lord-driven portion and supply!

-Praying for a productive Scalpel Board meeting in Miami, FL, early January 2019, during which time we hope to better address the complexity of problems inherent in responding to suffering in the developing world with the clarity of Biblical insights. †

2018 SATC YTD MISSION VITALS



3 TRIPS
FEB, JUL, SEPT

1 SPECIALTY
TRIP NOVEMBER



56 TEAM
MEMBERS

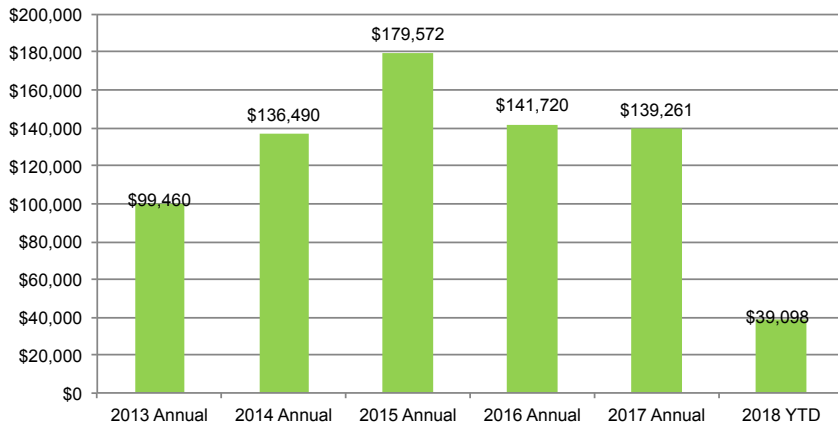
\$112,500
DONATED TIME OF PERSONNEL



60 SURGICAL
PATIENTS

\$358,234
ESTIMATED VALUE OF MEDICAL SUPPLY

ANNUAL GIVING SUMMARY (Totals Include Board Members) 2013 - 2018 YTD



please support our mission

Online giving is easy and convenient at:
giving.ncsservices.org/scalpelatthecross

or contact us at:
P.O. Box 558436
Miami, FL 33255
www.scalpelatthecross.org
305-922-4486

*We apologize for the description oversight in the Spring 2018, Issue 24 of Scalpel's Edge. Please note a correction for The Annual Summary graphs in that issue. Those graphs represented annual giving and included Board Member giving.