

SCALPEL'S EDGE

Scalpel AT THE CROSS
A Christian Medical Mission
to the Peruvian Amazon

A GIFT OF LIGHT, HOPE AND SURGERY TO PERU

FALL 2019 | ISSUE 29

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“What do you think about Peggy Gasior?”
Bingo-Bingo-Bingo! At that point, we only had a brief history with Peggy, but I knew instantly that she was our next Mission Director. ”

—Peter A. Cole, MD

WHAT IS IT WITH MISSION DIRECTORS AND BINGO?

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



I was never so convinced of the selection of an employee for Scalpel At The Cross as I was when the thought of Peggy Gasior entered my head. Bingo! Scalpel was well on its way as a ministry in 2013 after the tireless leadership of the one and only, Lisa K. Schroder, our beloved and first Mission Director. Lisa was a “Bingo!”

in her own right; we hit the jackpot to have this sage-phenom launch the ministry with my wife, Nancy, and me. But when Lisa stepped down, there was a gaping hole which lasted months, seven to be exact. I had interviewed, searched, prayed, pondered and passed on a dozen potential prospects; but nothing fully resonated

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WHAT IS IT WITH MISSION DIRECTORS AND BINGO?



until Nancy suggested, “What do you think about Peggy Gasior?” Bingo-Bingo-Bingo! At that point, we only had a brief history with Peggy, but I knew instantly that she was our next Mission Director. Peggy had no clue about the job of course, but I knew in a nanosecond that she would fill that position.

Though Peggy was well-established with her work in College Ministry at her Miami church, and though she had never been to Peru, let alone the Amazon, didn’t speak a lick of Spanish, would have to agree to an erratic schedule and a half dozen travel obligations a year, didn’t really know me, and lived a thousand miles away, I knew it was Bingo when Nancy asked the question. It was a “remembered where I was” moment, as vivid as the sun, which shines on my face right now. I was in the dining room, and Nancy was in the kitchen. “That’s it!” Peggy took an eternity to come to grips with the idea, to “pray and process” as only Peggy can! All the while I knew she would say yes. I hope this was confidence on my part and not some kind of arrogance, one

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of those Holy Spirit assurances when God whispers an answer to your soul and you just know it was God. And so the journey began in December of 2013. Thank you Jesus for granting us Peggy, 12/2013-10/2019—wow! “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.” Acts 1:7

Peggy was fantastic, did an amazing job, and guided Scalpel At The Cross through critical transitions. It is hard to choose her finest work, but certainly managing transitions and on-boarding

key employees and teammates was one of her strengths and collective achievements. Anyone who has worked in management for an organization understands how difficult transitions can be; and in this case she transitioned the positions of Mission Director, Mission Coordinator, Scalpel’s Edge Publisher, Communications Director, Peruvian Medical Director, and Jungle Campus Overseer. She on-boarded our first missionary family, which involved moving Dan, Laurie and daughter Lyndi Porch to the jungle from Minnesota for a two-year tenure, and transitioning them back home to the USA. She hired Linda Nite and Esteban Cardona, creating a new position in the process, retained our first Peruvian legal counsel, Laines Scharff, transitioned Isaac Mendoza from volunteer to Peruvian Mission Coordinator, and recruited Michael and Tiffany Simmons to run Jungle Bunks, coordinate teams, and maintain the Cashibo campus. Peggy demonstrated unusual grace in the midst of change, a lot of change, and no doubt her faithfulness led each step of the way, “I will teach you the way you should go; I will instruct you and advise you.” Psalm 32:8

Another one of Peggy’s early wins was to re-haul our Website, Newsletter, and communication materials with the intent to contemporize and yield a consistent feel and brand for our mission and vision messages. She introduced a social media platform and became editor for Scalpel’s Edge, all while providing a warm and present “face of the ministry” as is so important for the position of Mission Director.

Peggy also encouraged her Board of Directors and President to pay more attention to younger people, and we responded, even by voting onto the Board of Directors a new college graduate, Danielle Ellerbe, who remains on the Board after four



strong years. In addition, the complexion of mission teams and even donors began to tilt toward a younger demographic which has manifested in a nice generational balance inside the mission. Peggy adores young people, students of all flavors from music to medicine, and this love has made our ministry richer.

Certainly Peggy's greatest gift has to be relationalism. In fact, relationalism is not a real word, but I coined it after getting to know Peggy. Everyone falls in love with Peggy, and I am pretty sure Peggy falls in love with everyone! I learned that doing business with Peggy took time and taught me patience, and I mean this in the best way. I could never simply dive into business as I am so inclined to do, until we were "connected." She would always start out, "So how's it goin'...I mean, really, how are you doing Peter?" And of course, once someone you trust and care about takes the time to ask and listen, you always respond, "How are YOU doing Pegs?" By the time we would get to the topic list of things to cover our allotted time had lapsed, and we would have to schedule our next. Because of her relationalism modus operandi, which I can only assume is multiplied by hundreds of people in her worlds of "The U," "Granada," "The Music Industry and Gig Scene," "The Gables and Grove," "Jim's friends and students," as well as Jim--The Man himself, brother Paul & Joy, Mom & Dad, well, it is

not like I was jealous or anything, but it was not easy to get back on her calendar! I would go to Miami and she to Minnesota frequently so we could spend the hours necessary diving into the mechanics, metrics, money and machinations of the mission. Peggy indeed has a heart of 24+ karat gold, a gift for riveted listening, an exponentially empathic soul, and a love for ministry like no other. I was blessed beyond expression.

No one can claim to actually know Peggy until they get to know her husband Jim, and even then one enters new canyons of discovery and wonder. Getting to know Jim is a spectacularly delicious journey in its own right; Peggy and Jim are the gift of a lifetime! Thank you, Jim and thank you, Peggy; words cannot describe.

I have often stated that Peggy and Jim have the gift of boundless hospitality, which was true for stranger and friend. Their "Grand Central" home is open to anyone who needs a bed to lie on, a television for a football party, or a couch on which to cry. Simply put, they have demonstrated grace in the race, at every hill and curve. Thank you Jesus.

Another of Peggy's achievements, if I may use that label, is the bridging of her Granada Presbyterian Church to the Scalpel ministry. The degree to which God weaves these family fabrics creates a beautiful invisible seam, as though parts of the same Persian carpet. We have been colored and flavored by Pastors Carson, McCloud, and Sullivan, Esteban and Tati, Linda and Noah, Pete and Channing, the Granada college students, and countless people and gifts I cannot recount. When I consider the multiplicity of Scalpel's Granada inoculations injected by our beloved Pegs, it is like waves of answers and protection for our ministry, something impossible to consider as anything but divine intervention.

I will end on one of the best examples of these Granada inoculations. In a season of uncertainty last May regarding the future of Scalpel At The Cross, after Peggy had decided to step down due to growing

demands on her time, where did she turn? To her Granada family of course! She approached a friend, Jocelyn Taylor. I still have not met Jocelyn, but I'm indebted to her. "What about it, Jocelyn?" Peggy asked, "I believe you would be a great Mission Director!" Jocelyn prayed about it, but felt strongly that Peggy should speak with her friend, Kara Hoxworth. Networking for a replacement and connecting another dot, Peggy reached out to screen Kara by phone. Kara made the cut, Peggy passed her contact along to me, and I scheduled a phone interview.

It was an overcast, Minnesota, mid-Summer day, and I wanted to get out of the frenetic work-life of trauma surgery and meetings at the hospital to make an important phone call on a Friday afternoon. I needed to clear my mind for a solid and sustained conversation. I drove to a woodsy side street around our historic Cathedral Hill district of Saint Paul. I pulled up along a lonely sidewalk, turned the car off under a magnificently lush maple, put the windows down and felt the cool breeze from an impending storm. It felt good, fresh, and provided anticipation for both the conversation and the storm. As the breeze and the rain always remind of God's omniscient provision, I contemplated this theme and said a prayer: for clarity and discernment. I opened my eyes and dialed the new unknown contact, Kara Hoxworth. "Hello Kara Hoxworth, this is Peter Cole." An hour later the sun broke through the clouds, and the Lord held off the storm. I hung up the phone, and said out loud, "She's the one! Bingo!"

I am excited to introduce to you the very recently married, Kara Rodriguez, as the new Mission Director for Scalpel At The Cross. In this issue you will learn of our new blessing, and I would appeal to you to lift up this imminently qualified woman in your prayers today and as God would lead you throughout her time with the mission. ✝



SET IN HER HEART

By Jocelyn Taylor



Nearly two decades before Peggy Gasior lead my Discipleship Group at Granada Presbyterian Church in Coral Gables, Florida, Kara Hoxworth (as she was then known) happily slept on the floor of my freshman dorm room while visiting Wheaton College (IL). For reasons other than her initial accommodations, Kara decided to attend Wheaton College where she and I were members of the Women's Track and Field team. With her 6'2" frame, Kara wrote a new record book and lead our team to victory. Although we are no longer teammates,

we have remained friends since that first adventurous visit in 2002.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that our thoughtful Lord has given me a front-row seat as Peggy "passes the baton" to Kara in her new role as Scalpel's Mission Director. I believe Kara will be excellent in this role as she has a passion for Spanish-speaking countries and people; she is professionally qualified; and the LORD has been preparing her heart for Scalpel's mission.

This next step in Kara's career comes on the heels of getting a new last name: Rodriguez. Making her love for all things Latin official, Kara moved to South Florida where she met and married her God-fearing, Puerto Rican, shy-but-will-always-dance-in-public-if-it-makes-her-happy, husband, Sammy. Speaking Spanish was never difficult for Kara, but now she can enjoy communicating with her in-laws in a language she has always loved.

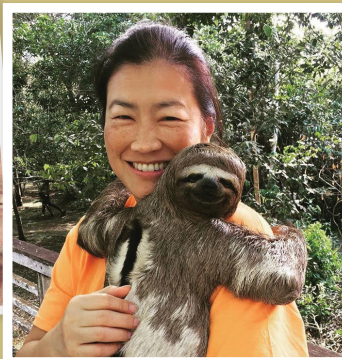
Kara has worked in higher education for the past six years coordinating, leading and designing study-abroad programs for students and advising international students. As anyone who has met her can attest, she's gregarious and absolutely loves to build relationships. She's traveled to over fifteen countries and does all the requisite administrative paperwork like a champ. She's been a Spanish teacher, volleyball coach and professional mentor. She has explored the world, embracing different

cultures and people while maintaining her faith and hope in Christ alone. She has served on over six mission trips. Her first experience abroad was a mission trip to Ecuador where she shared the gospel at orphanages and schools and her passion for the Spanish language was born. Learning another language was no longer simply a graduation requirement, but rather an opportunity to be able to communicate and build relationships with others.

But I believe the Lord set Scalpel's mission in Kara's heart long before she joined the team. You see, throughout her years as a competitive athlete and those that followed, Kara was in constant pain due to recurring injuries, which required surgery after surgery. She knows what it is like to be in need of medical care that only a surgeon can provide. She is compassionate, hopeful and humble because of her own intimate understanding of the physical, emotional and spiritual journey of being a patient. But most of all, Kara knows the healing power of the Gospel which is freely given to all who believe. In her new role as Mission Director, I have no doubt that Kara will use all the skills, experiences and passion that God has built up in her over the years to serve and share her faith. She is excited to join the team at Scalpel At The Cross and looks forward to living out Psalm 71:14-15, "But as for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more. My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long, though I know not its measure." ✝

GOD'S PLANS AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

By Peggy Gasior



"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:11-13

These are difficult verses to trust and live by, especially for someone who prefers to have daily, weekly, monthly, yearly plans, in addition to a five or ten-year plan! But as I reflect on almost six years with Scalpel At The Cross, the truth of these verses resonates more deeply than I ever imagined possible and I am overwhelmingly grateful.

My journey leading up to Scalpel was characterized by twists and turns never planned for. Despite God's obvious hand in those twists and turns, I continued trying to make my own plans, so when Dr. Cole first contacted me in 2013 about the opportunity with Scalpel At The Cross, my initial reaction was that this is not part of my plan. God had unexpectedly, of course, called me to college ministry in 2005, and I was deeply satisfied in that work. So much so, that I prayed about the position with Scalpel for 3+ months before realizing the only thing holding me back from accepting it was fear.

Fear raised many objections in my mind, and I was sure one or more of the objections would be enough to close the door. But God did away with every objection I could come up with. He made His plans clear to me, promised He

would be present in everything, and showed me more of who He is, and the work He is doing, in the compelling story of Scalpel.

There are so many aspects of this small, humble mission that were compelling then, and following a few years of exciting and exponential growth, remain compelling now. Scalpel At The Cross sends short-term medical mission teams regularly to the same location in the Amazon Jungle to provide much-needed, but costly and scarcely available, orthopaedic surgical care. This commitment to place and consistency of teams allows deep relationships to be developed with the local church, missionary community, government hospitals and the Pucallpan people. The desire to engage the local community in partnership develops opportunities for education and God's work in Pucallpa beyond what Scalpel alone may provide. The conviction to quality patient care and accountability allows patients to be cared for and followed for a year following surgery, long after the team returns stateside. And the ongoing call for team members establishes a Scalpel family reaching far and wide. The true beauty in all of this is that we make our best plans (which never work out the way we

intend), but always with prayer and hearts that are seeking Him. And oh, how faithful He is!

Over the past few years with Scalpel, almost everything I did was outside of my comfort zone, from trying to be relational with people who speak a different language, to learning about rongeurs, osteotomes, and SIGN nails, and sleeping in a room with a bat flying overhead. I cannot imagine why I did not plan for this! But in six years, I have traveled to Peru 18 times, fallen in love with my "second home" in Pucallpa, experienced God in powerful ways, and learned to desperately depend on Him.

I am not someone who seeks thrills in the adventure, but in seeking God, I have found great JOY in the adventure. As He calls me to something new, I rejoice in the opportunity I have had to serve as Director and share in His work; I give thanks to Him for providing such an incredible gift in our new Director, Kara Rodriguez; and I look forward with great expectation to new ways of serving the mission.

"For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy." Psalm 92:4✝

REUNITED!

By Debra Elmore-Nesheim

This past July I attended a family reunion with many members, some of who had never met each other before. Others of us had not seen each other for years. Let me explain!

In 2009 and 2010, I went on three mission trips with Scalpel At The Cross. I remember moving around the bunkhouse and the clinic (now fellowship hall), going through the missions compound, and exploring Pucallpa, like it was yesterday. I was blessed to meet so many team members on those trips. Each trip was different, and each team member filled a unique need. Many of us stayed in contact through email and social media, but that is not all it has cracked up to be. Sometimes you want to SEE a person!

So, my good friend, Lisa Schroder, and I decided to have a Minnesota-based reunion for everyone from MN who had been on a Scalpel At The Cross mission trip. What a great experience! We arranged for a party room and catered appetizers. Then we waited to see who showed up.

About 30 Scalpel team members came! We were able to reconnect with those we had traveled with, as well as meet others from trips we had not been on. But we all had a common thread – Scalpel At The Cross. Through the mission, we had worked on common goals and had common acquaintances. We shared personal stories, and through that sharing we were able to see the growth and impact of this mission as it has grown from year to year. I believe the earliest trip represented was made in 2006, and the latest was 2019 (two weeks before the MN reunion!).

The commonalities we share through Scalpel create a family. The experiences we have had create a story. We are all chapters of the same book.

The different skills, backgrounds and insights each team member brings to Scalpel reminds me of the body of the Church revealed in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. I won't quote the whole reference, but it says, "The body is not made up of one part, but of many" and "...God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be." In the same way, God orchestrated each Scalpel mission trip and called specific team members to go. All to His glory!

Hearing each other's involvement and stories brought it home. We are a family. It was a bigger and better reunion than we expected. Dr. Cole was surprised, too, I think, to see the long-lasting impact the mission trips have

had on our lives. At the end of the night he said the only thing he would have done differently would be to arrive sooner, so he could see more people.

The Scalpel At The Cross family is still growing. And while we had a reunion for the MN part of that family, we know we are blessed to be part of a bigger story – His story. ✝



PURPOSED BY GOD

Nancy Cole on behalf of the Prayer Posse

"God will carry His people to Glory. He cannot fail, and therefore they cannot fail." -John Piper

I am eager to read Piper's most recent book on Providence, which he defines as the "purposeful sovereignty of God." He summarizes the content of this most recent work using Isaiah 46:9-10, "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'"

Purposeful sovereignty ~ the assurance that all of God's purposes stand...from the most minute, to the largest of happenings or events... is to no doubt have a settling, stilling effect on our souls. Yet we must to permit it to. The totality of Scripture teaches that God is not capricious in his oversight. He is duly intentional. He is definitive and resolute. The promise to those of us who believe is that we will never fail to persevere, no matter how steep the slope nor tumultuous the water appears before us. His Word will carry us to completion. "...so shall my Word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:11 What a comfort that is in this unsure world...that God is our one sure Guide. Despite the chaos we sense on Earth, the immeasurable greatness of God's power towards those who believe helps us navigate through life challenges undergirded by this unshakable refuge. How awesome is that? Not only are we NOT enough...we don't need to be. He is more than enough to sustain and embolden our weak frame.

With that as a backdrop for the confidence we have in moving mountains, allow me to share some of the magnificent ways the Lord has empowered Scalpel At The Cross in recent months:



-We have hired a dynamic new Mission Director, Kara Rodriguez, who is currently working alongside our beloved Mission Director of 5+ years, Peggy Gasior, for purposes of a smooth transition. Kara brings a background replete with international experience, fluency in Spanish, team leadership, and great passion for our Lord and His kingdom.

-We have partnered with a new company to expand upon our patient outcomes medical records system, which will allow us greater capacity to effectively run trips, maintain inventory, monitor and access outcomes across time, and respond to the growing needs of the mission. This new IT help has been a tangible answer to prayer.

-We have also engaged Stewardship Planning Partners (SPP) to help Scalpel with fundraising initiatives through 1:1 tutelage of our Director of Development, Communications and Patient Care, Esteban Cardona; as an aside, we are praising God for Esteban's official U.S. citizenship granted September 2019! In a similar vein, SPP worked steadfastly with Danielle Ellerbe to successfully launch a Boston fundraiser in August 2019 using principles gleaned from our partnership.

-We have submitted an article ("The Development of a Surgical Mission in The Peruvian Amazon: History, Implementation, Accomplishments, Challenges, and Vision: A 15-Year Expedition"), which has been accepted into a highly academic and prestigious orthopaedic publication (the Journal of Bone & Joint Surgery). This would not have been possible without the collaborative efforts of authors Peter Cole, Jr. & Sr., Bradley Lezak, and Lisa Schroder.

-We have recently partnered with three Physician Assistants in-training at Bethel University, St. Paul, MN, to help fulfill academic and community service requirements for their graduate program through work with Scalpel's orthotic/prosthetic initiative in Pucallpa.

-We have purchased land on the perimeter of our current property and have begun early developmental phases of meeting with Peruvian contractors for purposes of building a protective wall against invaders/squatters.



-We have shored up our Halo Ministries efforts by partnering more intentionally with our local Peruvian church, Mil Palmeras, to improve patient family/Scalpel team member relations and

evangelistic outreach during medical campaigns in a manner which can be replicated more easily.

With the aforementioned momentum, we covet your prayers for the following:

-Medical campaigns currently scheduled for February 2020 and April 2020. Specifically, prayer cover for the sterilization machine (autoclave) at Hospital Amazonico, which was broken down during the October 2019 campaign, with no plans for repair.

-A vision trip with prospective donors scheduled for January 2020, which will include the founder of Tillges Orthotics/Prosthetics of St. Paul, MN.

-Re-roofing of our Jungle Bunks residence to restore it to its original status and prevent ongoing issues with moisture, tarantulas, and bats finding their way into the interior of the home.

-Robust finances as we innovate with fundraising practices and continue to connect well with our current donor base...all the while discerning the Lord's will for our vision of building our own Scalpel Hospital at some future point.

-Successful receipt and passage of our orthopaedic implants through Customs on every campaign. Praises that, during the July and October campaigns, Customs never scanned or queried one item brought through.



-Praise for our most recent Scalpel Board Meeting in Miami, FL, where we welcomed newest board member, Dr. Clayton Nelson.

We are humbled by your willingness to join hands with us as we endeavor to serve the underserved in Peru through our love of our Sovereign God, the supremacy of our saving Christ, and the power of His infallible Scriptures. ✝

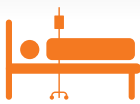
2019 SATC YTD MISSION VITALS


3 TRIPS
TRIPS - FEB, JUL, OCT

\$286,977
ESTIMATED VALUE OF
MEDICAL SUPPLIES

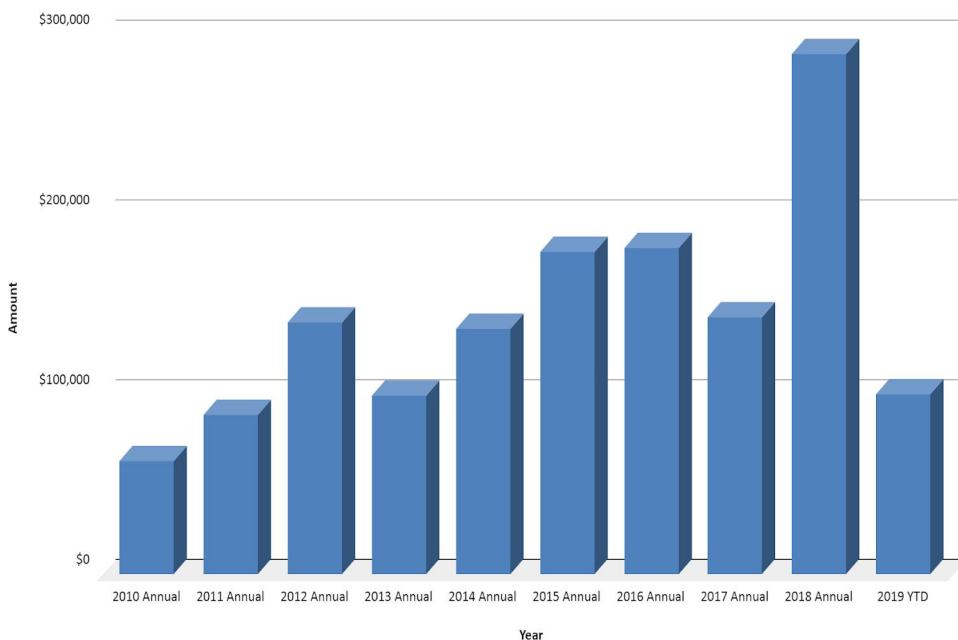

53 TEAM
MEMBERS

\$117,239
ESTIMATED DONATED
TIME OF PERSONNEL


67 SURGICAL
PATIENTS

\$689,200
ESTIMATED VALUE OF
MEDICAL CARE

2010-2019YTD (9/30) Annual Giving Summary
(totals shown include Board giving)




AT THE CROSS
A Christian Medical Mission
to the Peruvian Amazon

*please support
our mission*

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

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