

# SCALPEL'S EDGE

A GIFT OF LIGHT, HOPE AND SURGERY TO PERU

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“ I became fascinated and contemplated how the depth and quality of relationships was different...but why? ”

## THE SCALPEL COMMUNITY

 BY PETER A. COLE, M.D. - *President, Scalpel At The Cross*


I was never so impressed by our larger community as I had been on a more intimate trip to Pucallpa this past September with several extended family members. What struck them most clearly, they exclaimed repeatedly, was that "There's an entire community you guys have down here—it's amazing!" From that point forward I began to think about Scalpel At The Cross quite differently. The mission has now amplified for me, and my heart swells with thankfulness.

What became clear is that my brother and two aunts/uncles, had historically considered the mission as a place, like the Peruvian Amazon, or a hospital where we do surgery, or a campus where we host guests. The crazy thing is that they have heard about our ministry countless times for twenty years but never considered it a community. Perhaps those of you who have never been with us in Peru have considered Scalpel At The Cross, likewise, as a global health trip, a Cole family project, or a bucket list item?

Since I was not leading a surgical campaign this time (replete with a myriad of duties and surgical patients), I got to experience the wonder of our Peruvian home through their eyes, and clearly what was most salient to them was the community which surrounded us daily. Whether at the airport, gas station, hospital, restaurant, or right at home, people would approach us with overflowing greetings. What also became clear through this eye witness account is that the phenomenon of community is far more powerful than a place, a hospital, or a trip.

I began to ponder why, and what is, a community? What impressed Jan & Andy, Gigs & Sir David, and Mark, toward this end? What is God's intention for a community? I became fascinated and contemplated how the depth and quality of relationships was different. Relationship, that's it, but why? Timoteo, our new GM in Peru recently described that he sees a distinguishable Scalpel At The Cross

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## THE SCALPEL COMMUNITY

thread which weaves all about and throughout the entire tapestry of the city of Pucallpa. "Bisturí Ante La Cruz esta transformando la ciudad de Pucallpa para Dios," he stated.

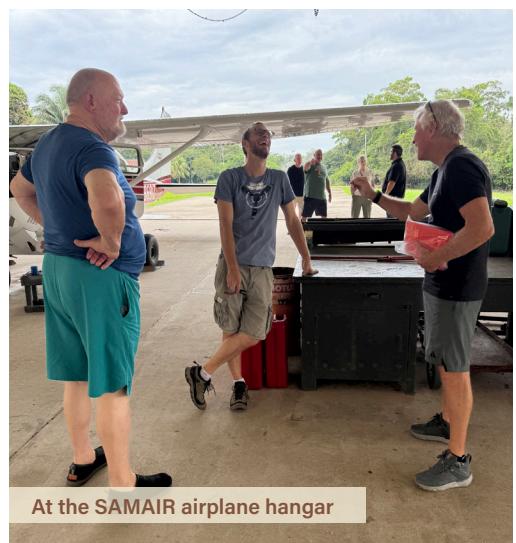
The author of Hebrews 10: 24-25 states, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." This verse makes a great purpose statement for our ministry, and indeed, it could do the same for your family, church, and workplace. We are exhorted to "stir" each other to love and action. In order to stir you need to grasp a handle and move it around—it's intentional! Let's ask ourselves, how can we behave or act accordingly? It is clear in the verse that "neglecting to meet" is not okay if you are interested in growing cohesion, trust, loyalty, and mutual affection. Only when we are together can we "encourage one another," clearly an active ingredient to inspire reciprocal behavior. Additionally, we are to stir one another in haste, as is indicated by the end of verse 25, "all the more as you see the Day drawing near." This refers to the time when Jesus comes back to "judge the quick and the dead," according to 2 Timothy 4: 1, an essential doctrine found in the Christian Nicene and Apostles' Creeds that we read so often in our services of worship. It is obviously essential to be proactive in our relationships to achieve richer communities, and that requires meeting, making plans, and spurring each other on, which in turn become self-fulfilling and richer yet through love and action.

Circling back to my family trip in September, I recall many intentional daily gatherings with other families for homemade meals, being vulnerable in group discussions with SAM missionary parents who invited me to share our story, exhorting and encouraging one another, walk-and-talks, missionaries showing up at the front door randomly to see if there was anything we needed while dropping off banana bread, loaves



of bread, jungle fruits, etc...I recall sing-along church-services, team-prayers, Chifa night for 50 in our home. We had five solid days chalk full of relationships, loads of laughs, some challenges, some tears, many hugs, and stirring one another to love and action. I considered, we've been doing this since 1990—community!

At Scalpel we seek to share the love of Christ through a medical mission in the Peruvian Amazon because of the urgency expressed in our host Hebrew's verse. Amen! ■



# PASSING THE SCALPEL

## A REGIONS TRAINEE LEGACY

BY DR. CHRIS CHERMSIDE-SCABO

*Team member of April 2025 Scalpel Medical Campaign*

I first had the opportunity to volunteer on a medical mission trip to Peru during high school, where I witnessed the profound lack of access to care and essential resources that so many people in the country face. Afterward, I returned home with a deep conviction and promised myself that I would one day return when I had more to offer. This past April, that vow came full circle when the opportunity arose to join a surgical campaign with Scalpel At The Cross.

One of the most meaningful aspects of this trip was contributing to the legacy of those mentored by Dr. Cole through their involvement with Scalpel At The Cross—spanning five eras of University of Minnesota trainees at Regions Hospital: Jason Caron (resident, 2008), Elspeth Kinnucan (resident, 2010), Ryan Horazdovsky (resident, 2013), John Wechter (resident, 2014), Tyler Dahl (resident, 2017), Pierre Marie Woolley (fellow, 2018), Cody Sessions (resident, 2022), and myself (current resident). During this campaign, under the leadership of Dr. Caron, our group embodied the lineage of mentorship—each of us representing a different stage in the shared tradition of integrating global service into surgical training. Joining this legacy is both a privilege and an honor. Observing how each surgeon has built upon their experiences as residents through this organization, and even involving their families in the mission, has inspired me to carry that same commitment forward throughout my own career and personal life.

Working side by side, we relied on creativity, resourcefulness, and humility, all qualities rooted in the training culture at Regions Hospital. Additionally, delivering high-quality surgical care amid limited resources fostered a kind of growth that few other environments can replicate. Both between cases and in the evenings, we shared stories of mentorship, training, and

past campaigns. Those moments reminded us that our efforts were part of something greater than ourselves, a living tradition of service that continues to shape both surgeons and the communities they serve.



My motivation to embark on this journey stemmed from a desire to return with more to offer, yet the April campaign humbled me in unexpected ways. One patient in particular left a lasting impression: a young boy named Cliver with bilateral clubfeet that had been inadequately treated. What struck me the most was how preventable his disability could have been with timely access to care. In the U.S. his condition could have been corrected with serial casting in infancy. However, limited access meant that as he grew, his deformity worsened, putting him at risk for chronic wounds and lifelong disability. Seeing



Cliver's lived experience underscored how inequities in access determine so much of a person's future. Testimonies like his made me especially excited about the Miracle Campus, which aims to expand access to bracing, rehabilitation, education, and preventive care. The campus represents a long-term commitment to Pucallpa in addressing the gaps that create situations like Cliver's, and not just treating surgical conditions, but working upstream to prevent them.

Standing in Pucallpa, surrounded by fellow Minnesota trainees, I felt the breadth of something far greater than one trip. Each group before us had contributed to the foundation we now carry forward, and this made it all the more important to persevere, not letting flooding, condemned O.R.'s or any external circumstances get in the way of impactful medical care.

Returning home, I realized the promise came to fruition. I finally returned to Peru with more to offer, but perhaps also with more perspective to gain. Returning home, I realized the promise came to fruition: I finally returned to Peru with more to offer, but perhaps also with more perspective to gain. I carried with me both gratitude and responsibility—gratitude for the opportunity to serve, and responsibility to carry forward the legacy of the trainees who came before me. ■



# PATIENT ENDURANCE - SEGUNDO

Written from the perspectives of Dr. Brian Hedges, Dr. Pierre Marie Woolley (SATC Medical Director), and Channing Cole (SATC Board Member)

At age 51, Segundo Wilder Alvarado Sifuentes had endured the unimaginable. Twenty-five years earlier, a gunshot wound shattered both bones in his right forearm, leaving him with a chronic nonunion and a severely deformed limb. The injury made his arm limp and unstable, flopping in any direction and robbing him of meaningful control, strength, and mobility. Simple tasks were exhausting and caring for his family was difficult. Despite every limitation, Segundo worked tirelessly to provide for those he loved.

For a quarter of a century he searched for surgical help, traveling from clinic to clinic, only to be turned away. The case was daunting: altered anatomy, scarred tissues, and nerves and vessels distorted by decades of malalignment. Many feared attempting such a complex reconstruction. Even still, Segundo's determination never wavered. He adapted, persevered, and displayed the kind of resilience that speaks profoundly to endurance when coupled with faith.

## A Transformative Moment of Hope

In November 2024, Dr. Woolley and Dr. Hedges reviewed Segundo's case and immediately advocated for his surgery. The operation required meticulous navigation through distorted anatomy and long-standing scar tissue. By God's grace and the steady hands of the surgical team, the bones were realigned, stabilized, and fixed—restoring structure to an arm that had been broken for most of Segundo's adult life. Remarkably, shortly after surgery, Segundo was able to flex each of his fingers, a small but powerful sign of hope for a future filled with restored function.

## The Road Ahead

Today, Segundo is on the path to regaining two functional arms. His lifelong perseverance allowed him to work despite the deformity; now, healing will empower him to work more effectively, provide more confidence, and embrace a new level of physical capability. His story is a profound reminder of the life-changing impact of accessible surgical care, the beauty of perseverance in suffering, and the perfect timing of the Lord, who unfolds His plan in ways we cannot comprehend until the moments of restoration arrive.

## A Scripture Placed on Our Hearts

John 5:2-9 — The Healing at the Pool of Bethesda.

"When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, He said to him, 'Do you want to be healed?...Jesus said to him, 'Get up, take up your bed, and walk.' And at once the man was healed..." ■



# FIRES, FLOODS, & MORE FIRES

## A YEAR OF EXTREMES

BY REBECA MUELLER - Peruvian Communications Coordinator &

BY TIFFANY SIMMONS - Peruvian Cashibo Campus Oversight

*"The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety  
by Him, who shelters him all the day long;  
and he shall dwell between His shoulders."*

Deuteronomy 33:12

### Fires – September 2024

by Rebeca Mueller

The Amazon has faced some of its most intense dry seasons in years, causing fires to break out and spread rapidly. In September 2024, flames crept frighteningly close to Scalpel's medical clinic, storage space, and fellowship hall. Thanks to SAMAIR and local partners who quickly created a firebreak, the fire was stopped just in time. This close call underscored what the regions is experiencing—the harshest dry seasons in decades, worsened by deforestation, agricultural burning, and climate change—all making fires more frequent and more destructive. So, we prayed for rain...



### Floods – April 2025

by Tiffany Simons

Just months later, the region swung to the opposite extreme. The rainy season brought historic flooding across eastern Peru. Cashibo Lake overflowed, turning SAMAIR base into a series of small islands. Canoes replaced cars as six of the ten homes—including Scalpel's Jungle Bunks and apartment—were completely surrounded by water.

While children made the most of the rising waters, adults navigated weeks of isolation and logistical challenges. However, our own inconveniences felt small compared to the devastation faced by families across the region who experienced homes destroyed, unsafe living conditions, and entire communities trapped in contaminated floodwaters. SAM Academy students stepped up to deliver 200 baskets of food, toiletries, and New Testaments to families in need. By God's grace, Scalpel's property was spared from major damage.



### More Fires – September 2025

by Rebeca Mueller (continued)

As the dry season returned, so did the fires. Just a few months ago on September 28, 2025, a small trash fire near the Miracle Campus in Pucallpa escalated into a nearly uncontrollable blaze. Two hectares burned, and several Faienap families were forced to evacuate as thick smoke filled the air. Neighbors and members of the Swiss mission worked tirelessly until volunteer firefighters arrived, fighting both wind and limited water supplies to protect surrounding wooden homes.

It was terrifying to see the fear in our community, unsure whether the flames would reach their houses. Thankfully, in the midst of danger, the community rallied, and by God's mercy the fire was contained. That night, we rested in gratitude, trusting in the Lord's faithful protection. ■



# PRAISES & PRAYERS

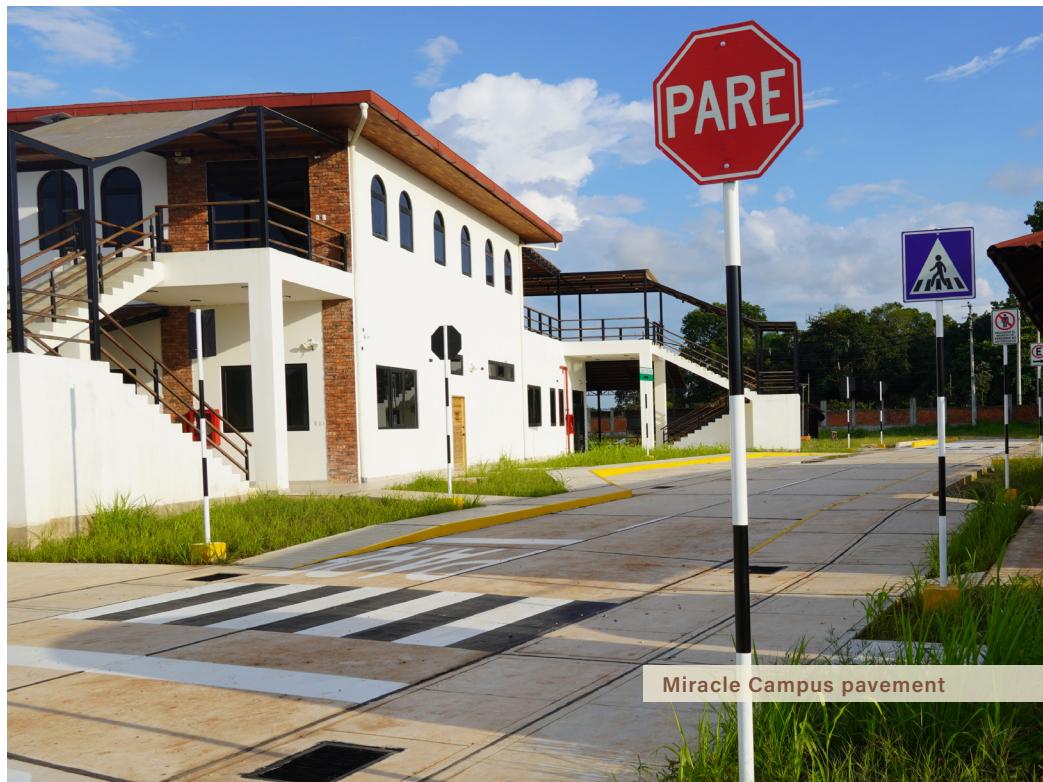
BY NANCY COLE

*Director, Prayer Posse, Scalpel At The Cross*

## PRAISES

- Tremendous October surgical campaign (under the new administrative lead of Dr. Luzmila Cahua Sessions) evaluating 120 clinic patients, delivering 40 cortisone injections, completing 22 surgeries of which 17 were highly complex, & sharing the gospel of saving faith with every patient seen.
- Successful transition of Executive Mission Director into two roles based in U.S. (Yuki Centeno) & Peru (Timoteo Hidalgo); both leaders are Peruvian & made internal moves within Scalpel to fulfill these critical positions which God has uniquely equipped them for.
- Hiring for the new rehab facility is in process, with current rehab team consisting of outstanding prosthetist & 2 physical therapists to date.
- Adjustments to the 5 individuals serving on our Peruvian board of directors.
- Provision & generosity of private, same day surgery center (Serfarmed) in Pucallpa for all future surgical campaigns, as Hospital Amazónico's O.R.'s will not be reopened, having been condemned.

- Favor for Scalpel with appointment of another new Medical Director at Hospital Amazónico, the 4th one in the past 6 months.
- Completion of entry gate & concrete sidewalks/driveway of Miracle Campus.
- Connection of our Miracle Campus facilities to Pucallpa's power grid, as machines for prosthetic fabrication cannot withstand the high temps/ humidity & need to have sufficient air flow to properly function.
- Acquisition of German Shepherd guard dog ("Asgard") for Miracle Campus heightened security.
- Protection from forest fire which burned many acres due to seasonal drought, yet stopped short of the Miracle Campus.
- Benevolence of ministry donors at October 18th Phoenix Fundraiser. ■



## PRAYERS

- Jose Jeri, just sworn in as the 8th person to become president of Peru in the last decade, a reflection of the country's deep, ongoing political instability. He is a member of the conservative "We Are Peru" party promising to go after crime.
- Protection from squatters whom are working their way from the city proper towards our area.
- Finalization of documents with notarized signatures of newly formed peruvian board members for the Peruvian association, Bisturí Ante La Cruz. This will be foundational for establishment of a Peruvian bank account. We have stalled imports of German machinery.
- Completion of our Miracle Campus fencing & landscaping.
- January 15th-25th Surgical Campaign led by Dr. Clayton Nelson who will

spend the entire month in Pucallpa with his family.

- Favor with the new appointed Hospital Amazónico Director to continue being able to use the facilities for clinic day as well as their patient wards post-operatively.
- Preparations for Miami Gala 2/7/26. We are in need of underwriters for table/title sponsorships.
- Miami based Scalpel Board Meeting March 13th-15th.
- Connection of our Miracle Campus facilities to the power grid; asphalting & landscaping. Heightened security measures, as our work in Pucallpa has gained exposure, making us vulnerable to crime.
- Overall navigation of complicated red tape (paperwork, signatures, notarizations) in the developing world. ■



JANUARY - DECEMBER 2025

# MISSION VITALS

	Number of Trips	4
	Surgical Patients	76
	Team Members	63
	Estimated Value of Care (1)	\$1,270,500
	Estimated Value of Volunteer's Time (2)	\$279,990
	Estimated Value of Medical Supplies Donated (3)	\$74,814
	Number of patients evaluated in clinic	398

Mission Vitals are reported to demonstrate objective estimates of contribution to patient care. This tool is only one measure of ministry vitality.

**Scalpel At The Cross acknowledges and believes in the immeasurability of the Spiritual Impact of our teams' efforts in this domain.**

We hope, rather, that the focus is appreciated in the reflections, anecdotes, and expression in the Scalpel's Edge editions which point to the incalculability of the Lord's hand at work. Spiritual Impact reports from each trip are available upon request.

## 2025 GENERAL FUND GIVING CAMPAIGN



**(1) Estimated Value of Care:**

Value of Patient Care = Assigning dollar value to each surgical/clinical procedure performed, categorized by procedure type.

These values, though approximations, are conservative by U.S. standards.

**(2) Estimated Value of Volunteer's Time:**

Opportunity Cost of Medical Professionals = (Daily Mean Income of Medical Professionals) x (Number of Days Spent on Campaigns)

**(3) Estimated Value of Medical Supplies Donated:**

Value of Medical Supplies = Valuation Assessments provided by (Contributing Medical Device) + (Surgical Supply Company)



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