

CHS News

CHS partners with FUNSEPA, Microsoft to modernize public education in Guatemala

On Aug. 24, [Carolinas HealthCare System](#) (CHS) representatives joined Guatemalan residents and government officials to celebrate the opening of a public school's computer laboratory in Chimaltenango, Guatemala. The event, held at the school EORM Aldea Chimazat, de Santa Cruz Balanyá, marked the official recognition of a unique collaboration among international groups to modernize the public school system in Guatemala through the initiative Tecnología para Educar (Technology to Educate).

Since 2010, CHS' International Medical Outreach (IMO) Program—a partnership between CHS and [Heineman Foundation of Charlotte](#)—has worked with [Fundación Sergio Paiz Andrade](#) (FUNSEPA) and Microsoft Corporation (Microsoft), to collect, donate and install refurbished, fully-functional computers in Guatemalan public schools with limited or no access to technology. FUNSEPA has installed more than 11,000 computers, benefiting 313,000 students, since it began the initiative in 2005. The goal is to install a total of 300,000 computers in 19,000 schools.

“It is a privilege for Carolinas HealthCare System to contribute to a project of such magnitude that positively impacts the lives of children in Guatemala,” said Michael Tarwater, Chief Executive Officer for CHS. “We have helped break education barriers in schools in the United States for years, and we are excited to now facilitate similar initiatives in communities globally. At CHS, we consider the education of children a priority.”

Limited exposure to quality education is a leading cause of economic hardships in Guatemala, where 95 percent of public schools lack access to technology and more than 50 percent of children live in poverty. Technology to Educate is setting a new standard by allowing students to receive the training necessary to thrive in today's digital society and workplace.

“At FUNSEPA, we believe we can break the poverty cycle by exposing children to computers and leveraging technology to improve the quality of their education,” said Salvador Paiz, President of FUNSEPA. “Thanks to donations from organizations like Heineman Foundation and Carolinas HealthCare System, we open windows of opportunities at each school and deliver on our promise to bridge the technology gap. We are committed to change the future of Guatemala, one child at a time, and to honor the memory of my father, Sergio Paiz, through this exceptional project.”

To date, the IMO Program has donated more than 6,000 computers, and it aims to donate 15,000 more with support from businesses such as Bank of America and Wells Fargo. IMO collects the hardware and wipes the hard drives using Tableau Drive Wiper, a method used by the U.S. Department of Defense. It then ships the computers to the FUNSEPA offices in Guatemala, where specially designed software provided by Microsoft is installed. When ready, the computers are distributed to schools, where parent and teacher associations help with the long-term management of the computer laboratories.

To receive computer donations, schools must apply and meet certain criteria, such as having adequate space, electricity and doors with locks. The teachers also must be willing to undergo computer training. Schools receive a six-month guarantee with each computer, as well as an equipment maintenance manual. If 70 percent of the equipment remains functional after three years, FUNSEPA replaces the computer.

“This is a remarkable project of scope and size, and we are hopeful it will pave the way for future improvements in Guatemala, socially and economically,” said Francis Robicsek, MD, PhD, vice president of the IMO Program. “We will continue to support the computer project, as well as the medical initiatives we have helped establish in the country.”

Since the 1970s, the IMO Program has helped develop sustainable cardiac care services in Guatemala, including the creation of the most comprehensive heart institute in Central America, the [Guatemalan Institute of Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery](#). The institute was born nearly a decade after IMO assisted in performing the first five open heart surgeries in Guatemala. Currently, IMO is helping establish a network of echocardiography laboratories throughout the country to increase patient access to the procedure, particularly in rural hospitals.

In addition to participating in education projects globally, CHS has supported local education for years. In North Carolina, a notable contribution is its annual participation in Help Kids Succeed program, a month-long drive that benefits Classroom Central, a free school supply store for low-income schools in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and surrounding districts. In 2011, CHS employees donated \$78,000 in supplies and backpack sponsorships, and thousands of volunteer hours to the program.