

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL OUTREACH

When **partnerships** deliver **hope**, we all move **forward**.



2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Atrium Health



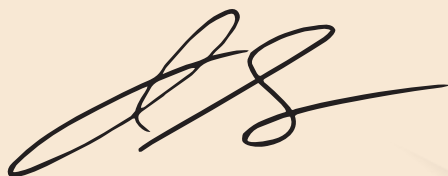
Dear Friends & Colleagues

We're proud to look back at the meaningful progress for the Heineman-Robicsek Foundation and our International Medical Outreach program during 2025. Through new collaborations, expanded training opportunities, lifesaving medical care, and continued investment in research, we strengthened our ability to improve healthcare access and outcomes in underserved communities.

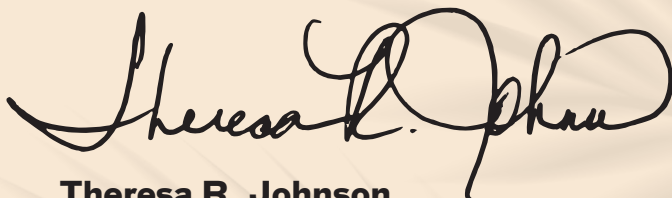
Throughout the year, our work continued across Latin America. In Honduras, Clínica Luz y Vida expanded access to high-quality outpatient and surgical care. In Guatemala, long-standing programs continued to grow through cardiac diagnostics, regional anesthesia and point-of-care ultrasound training, medical equipment donations, technology for schools, and partnerships serving vulnerable children and families. In Belize, important advances in cardiac care were supported by specialized clinical education, critical care nursing training, and collaboration with international healthcare partners. We also helped make possible a life-changing cardiac surgery for a patient in Barbados, extending the reach of our mission to another Caribbean community.

Alongside our international programs, we remained committed to supporting promising research with the potential to advance treatment and save lives for years to come.

Every accomplishment featured in this report was made possible through partnership and collaboration. We are deeply grateful to the healthcare professionals, volunteers, donors, and all our supporters who share our commitment to creating healthier communities. Your generosity and steadfast support continue to move our mission forward. Together, we are expanding access to care and building a lasting foundation for progress.



James C. Olsen
President, Heineman-Robicsek Foundation



Theresa R. Johnson
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Mission

To enhance healthcare in Latin America, by providing public hospitals with essential medical equipment, supplies, training, and pioneering medical research.

Our commitment extends to educating healthcare providers on the latest advancements in medical technology, practices, and research to make a lasting impact and improve the lives of their underserved populations.

Concurrently, we provide grant support for medical research to qualified applicants, including, but not limited to, cardiothoracic and vascular surgery, cardiology, oncology, anesthesiology, and translational and transformative research.

15-Year Impact

Over the years, International Medical Outreach (IMO) and Heineman-Robicsek Foundation (HRF) have expanded their reach, touching the lives of patients, families, and healthcare professionals in 46 countries.

IMO's core programs provide new, gently used, and refurbished medical equipment to under-resourced hospitals and clinics worldwide, while offering education and training opportunities that help healthcare professionals strengthen their knowledge and skills. The organization also supports primary and secondary schools with access to technology.

Remaining true to its research roots, IMO continues to fund projects with the potential to improve care and save lives for generations to come. This work is made possible through the generous financial and logistical support of individuals, businesses, charitable organizations, and nonprofit partners.

1.5 million lives touched through combined programs
\$57.9 million of new medical & electronic equipment donated
596,486 pounds of medical & computer equipment recycled

Commitment

Unlike many charitable organizations, HRF spends **95% of its donated funds** on designated projects. Donor contributions are not used for fundraising.

Honduras





Light and Life: A Clinic Grows to Meet Its Community

In collaboration with Evangelistic Faith Missions (EFM), Clínica Luz y Vida, approximately 2.5 hours southwest of San Pedro Sula, has already enhanced healthcare services for the people of Honduras.

However, there's still work to be done. And IMO is thrilled to champion the next expansion of community-serving care.

Outpatient Facility. In-Depth Care.

The Clínica Luz y Vida medical compound was established in 1978 with the opening of a medical center. Since 2003, seasoned EFM missionary Daniel Melton has been leading the compound's expansion, including the addition of a Surgery Center in 2021.

In his original vision for the facility, he hoped for a place that could provide both essential medical services and spiritual care to the underserved people of San Luís and Santa Bárbara.

What it would become was beyond what even he could have imagined.

Today, Clínica Luz y Vida serves around 40 patients per day and employs two full-time nurses and a 24/7 on-call physician. Each year, Clínica Luz y Vida delivers 350 babies. That equates to almost one delivery per day. The clinic is well on its way to establishing a sustainable healthcare model for the local community, bringing employment and greater operational independence with it.



A Bigger Vision for Better Access

Though Clínica Luz y Vida has already surpassed what many thought possible, Melton believes there's still more opportunity for growth. So, he reached out to HRF for assistance with equipping a new general clinic.

The facility, including a pharmacy, emergency room, operating room for minor surgeries, and a labor & delivery unit is currently under construction.

With the help of IMO and the generous support of **James J. and Nicole Bissell**, the general clinic will have the medical equipment and supplies it needs to usher in a new era of comprehensive care for the community.

And the people of San Luís and Santa Bárbara will be one step closer to a new beacon of light, life, and quality, compassionate care.



The facility, including a **pharmacy**, **emergency room**, **operating room** for minor surgeries, and a **labor & delivery** unit is currently under construction.

Guatemala





15 Years of Critical Diagnostics: Non-Invasive Network Delivers Cardiac Care with More Heart

This year marks an incredible milestone for IMO, as we complete the **15th year** working with the **Nan Van Every Cardiology Diagnostic Network**. Together, we have been able to continue early detection, prevention, and treatment of cardiovascular diseases in underserved communities throughout Central America.



It Began with Three

In 2010, La Unidad de Cirugía Cardiovascular de Guatemala (UNICAR) established the collaborative Nan Van Every Cardiology Diagnostic Network with Atrium Health Sanger Heart & Vascular Institute (SHVI).

What began as specialized consultations for echocardiograms and cardiac catheterizations through a secure communication portal quickly evolved into a transformative resource for patients across Guatemala.

The success of the network's first three stations proved the model's effectiveness, and UNICAR and IMO leadership met with Guatemala's Minister of Health to advocate for the expansion of **12 diagnostic stations** throughout the country. **Fifteen years later, eight of those stations are fully operational**, providing critical access to cardiac evaluations for patients in rural public hospitals who would otherwise have limited or no access to these services.

The network enables physicians to assess heart function, valve performance, and other cardiovascular conditions through echocardiograms and additional non-invasive diagnostic tests. For thousands of patients, these diagnostic services have been the first step toward receiving lifesaving cardiac care.

Since its inception, the network has provided diagnostic care to **more than 50,000 patients**. Its remarkable success has not only improved cardiovascular outcomes in Guatemala but it also has served as a model for expanding similar programs in other countries.



A Well-Deserved Celebration

Fifteen years of building a lifesaving network is undoubtedly something to be celebrated. We were privileged to have the **First Lady of Guatemala** attend our celebration that included honoring **three dedicated sonographers** without whom the network's success would not be possible.

Mgtr. Maritza Elizabeth de los Santos Ventura, Lcda. Irma Yohana Tax Garcia, and Lcda. Iris Fabiola Girón Noriega have dedicated **10 years of service** to the Nan Van Every network.

This dedication included in-depth, three-month studies at SHVI in Charlotte and an additional eight months of intensive training in Guatemala City. This was a tremendous sacrifice since it meant leaving their families back home.

Their extraordinary commitment and dedication of service exemplify the mission, values, and lasting impact of IMO.

EVERY Child Seen:

Supporting Inclusive Services with the Foundation of the First Lady of Guatemala

For children with disabilities, access to healthcare, rehabilitation, and education services can mean the difference between isolation and inclusion. Having these support systems within reach helps a child participate more fully in their family, community, and future.

But in Guatemala, the realities surrounding access paint a difficult picture. It's a country of approximately 17 million people, **55% of whom live in poverty** with the highest concentrations in rural areas. Of those in poverty, a devastating **65% are children**.

While all these children and their families experience limited access to resources, those children with moderate to profound disabilities face even greater barriers. Their limited access to care and education greatly increase their risk of marginalization or even institutionalization.

Research shows just how stark the reality is. **Only 10%** of Guatemalan children with disabilities **complete primary school**, while **77% remain without access** to any kind of rehabilitation services. Many are unable to read or write.



A Mission Led by Care

Against this dismal backdrop, the hope of a strengthened support system has emerged.

HRF has collaborated with the [Secretaría de Obras Sociales de la Esposa del Presidente de la República de Guatemala \(SOSEP\)](#), also known as the Foundation of the First Lady of Guatemala, to create a more inclusive path forward.

SOSEP operates social daycare programs for children with disabilities, particularly those living in poverty. The important work they do helps connect children and families to support that may otherwise be out of reach.

An Eye-Opening Visit

[First Lady of Guatemala Dr. Lucrecia Peinado](#), an anesthesiologist with roots in the public health sector, carries a unique understanding of the complex circumstances affecting Guatemalan children.

In early 2025, the HRF team had the eye-opening experience of joining Dr. Peinado on a tour of the newly renovated Alida Center, the only government-run, special education school for children and teens with disabilities in all of Guatemala City.

Following the visit, Dr. Peinado requested HRF's support to help equip the Alida Center and other SOSEP facilities to further support the care, development, and dignity of children with disabilities.

She emphasized the need for equipment to expand SOSEP's services, specifically medical care, rehabilitation, physiotherapy, language therapy, psychological support, and sensory clinics.

Support Already in Motion

With the opportunity to help more children in Guatemala City and beyond to be seen, supported, and served in the ways they deserve, we set out to provide the requested resources without hesitation.

Made possible with support from the [George W. and Ruth R. Baxter Foundation](#) and the [Heineman Foundation of New York](#), the initial shipment of equipment has been prepared and is currently awaiting document approval from the Ministry of Health.

Together, we're helping children with disabilities in Guatemala realize a brighter, more inclusive future.



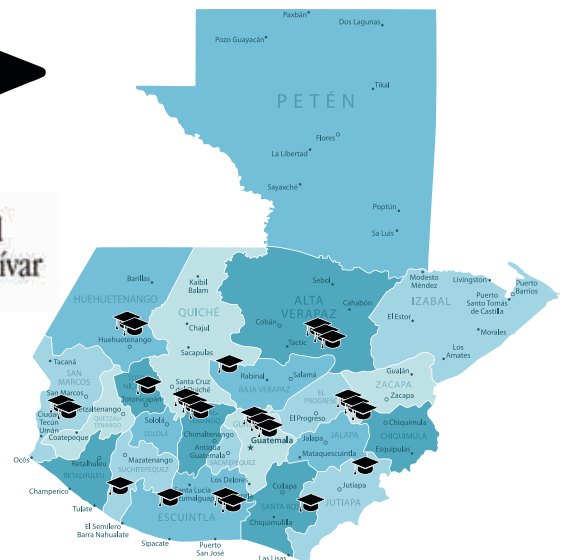
From Training to Transformation:

The Ripple Effect of Regional Anesthesia Training

What began as a way to address critical gaps in anesthesiology staffing and equipment among hospitals in Guatemala has grown into a specialized training initiative driving measurable improvements in anesthesia care across Central America.

After launching in Guatemala in 2024 in partnership with Universidad Rafael Landívar and the University of Florida – Gainesville, the **Regional Anesthesia and Point-of-Care Ultrasound (POCUS) Training Program** has expanded into a second location in Guatemala and a pilot program at Hospital Fundación Ruth Paz in Honduras.

24 New Senior Residents



Built for Real-World Care

With the support and advocacy of [Heineman Foundation of New York](#), senior anesthesiology residents and faculty members within the program are provided with an annual curriculum designed to strengthen clinical skills, improve patient safety, and expand access to advanced anesthesia techniques in resource-limited settings.

The curriculum maximizes innovation to combine virtual education, hands-on workshops, mentorship, and clinical application for a well-rounded approach. At its core is emphasizing the realities of practicing medicine in underserved communities. Each participant emerges with the practical skills they need to be successful in every aspect of care, from operating room to bedside.

Putting It into Practice

The program's impact is evident in clinical practice. Before the initiative launched, the Universidad Rafael Landívar anesthesia group performed approximately 200 regional anesthesia procedures annually. Over the past year alone, that number increased to approximately [1,500 ultrasound-guided procedures](#), most serving as alternatives or adjuncts to general anesthesia.

IMPACT SINCE 2024

75 Anesthesiologists Trained

15 Hospitals Reached Across 2 Countries

2.5K+ Ultrasound-Guided Procedures

25 Local Instructors Developed



Care That Reaches Farther

The program's benefits stretch far beyond its curriculum. As graduates enter practice, they bring advanced anesthesia skills to rural and underserved communities throughout Guatemala and Honduras.

Today, program-trained physicians are practicing across [15 hospitals](#), helping expand access to safer anesthesia techniques where specialized care has historically been limited.



Local Leadership Championing Lasting Change

One of the program's most significant achievements has been its transition toward local ownership. To date, **25 instructors** have been developed through the initiative, and the next course cycle will be taught primarily by Guatemalan faculty who completed the program themselves, with continued mentorship from the University of Florida team.

To enhance his new skillset, Dr. Edin Ismael Rapalo, head of the anesthesiology service at Ruth Paz Foundation Hospital in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, attended the 50th Annual Meeting of Regional Anesthesiology and Acute (ASRA) Pain Medicine in Florida and had this to say:

“The meeting was very beneficial to me, as I was able to attend a medical congress in the United States for the first time. I was able to attend such novel talks...that serve to realize how medicine is advancing in regional anesthesia and acute pain management. This opportunity would not have been possible without...Heineman-Robicsek Foundation.”

Additional efforts are strengthening long-term sustainability. Universidad Rafael Landívar is establishing the region's first Regional Anesthesia Interest Group, creating a platform for education, collaboration, and continued advancement of regional anesthesia practices throughout Guatemala and Central America. Plans are also underway for the first international regional anesthesia conference in Antigua, Guatemala, in 2027.

Putting Progress on the Map

The program is also gaining recognition through research. At the ASRA Pain Medicine meeting, a poster presentation related to this work was accepted under the title *Efficiency of a Structured Course of Regional Anesthesia in a Resource-Limited Setting in Guatemala*.

Authored by Federico Jimenez, M.D., Sandra Flores, M.D., Barys Ihnatsenka, M.D., Juan Mora, M.D., Erika Taco Vasquez, M.D., and Steven Robicsek, M.D., Ph.D., the presentation marks an important milestone for the program, bringing its model and outcomes to a broader medical audience.

Building Momentum into the Future

In 2026, 10 faculty anesthesiologists from the Instituto de Cancerología de Guatemala joined the training program, reflecting growing national recognition of its value.

Future program expansion is planned for Sololá and Amatitlán, adding to its current training sites in Escuintla, Quiché, and Huehuetenango.

With each achievement, local leadership is strengthened, access to crucial care is expanded, and lasting improvements in patient care are witnessed throughout the region. And that's a level of impact that can't be measured by numbers alone.

Spotlight:

An Investment in Future Leadership

The Regional Anesthesia and POCUS Training Program's impact can also be seen through the achievements of its participants.

Dr. Edvin Antonio Ozuna Duarte of Quiché, Guatemala, was recently selected for a fully funded scholarship through **OMI MEX**, an international fellowship program focused on anesthesia and intensive care education throughout Latin America. Recommended by Dr. Steven Robicsek of HRF, Dr. Ozuna represents the next generation of physicians advancing their expertise through opportunities made possible by the program.

His selection highlights how investments in education can create opportunities that extend far beyond the classroom, helping physicians bring new knowledge, skills, and leadership back to the communities they serve.



Widows Sons Balam: Driven to Serve in Guatemala



When Widows Sons Balam, a Masonic motorcycle club made up of professionals including doctors, mechanics, lawyers, and plumbers, saw an opportunity to bring much-needed medical care to the people of Guatemala, they put their purpose into motion.

A Brotherhood Built for Service

United by a commitment to helping others, this Masonic motorcycle brotherhood had already made a meaningful difference in Guatemalan communities by helping children suffering from burns access medical care and transportation.

In 2024, they were looking for new ways to expand their impact, which led them to HRF.

HRF board members met with the club to hear their vision: a mobile clinic equipped to extend their outreach beyond transportation and deliver essential medical services to people of all ages in remote communities.

Putting the Mission in Motion

James J. “JJ” Bissell and Nicole Bissell stepped up to turn that vision into reality. By funding the donation and refurbishment of a mobile clinic, they empowered HRF, IMO, and Widows Sons Balam to take a crucial step toward closing the distance between patients and care.

Officially inaugurated in January 2025 and entrusted to Widows Sons Balam, the mobile clinic is bringing healthcare closer to those who need it most. During the ceremony, Nicole Bissell and HRF Vice President Fernando Paiz were inducted into the Balam WS GT Chapter as honorary members. As they received their leather vests, the occasion marked a meaningful milestone of partnership, gratitude, and shared purpose.

Driving Care Further

The mobile clinic has opened new roads to care. The unit is now reaching communities where access has historically been limited. It provides transportation to hospitals while delivering general medical care to the people of Masagua and other underserved communities throughout Guatemala.

The clinic also makes scheduled visits to Hospital Juan Pablo II and other facilities, helping ensure patients can access care no matter where they live.

New Routes to Community Care

Already, the clinic's reach is expanding through new local partnerships. Widows Sons Balam has established relationships with several promising organizations:

- **Social Pastoral de San Cristóbal Acasagatlán, El Progreso**, a local pastoral group opening opportunities for future collaboration with the municipality.
- **Alianza por la Cuenca del Motagua**, an intersectoral initiative interested in incorporating preventive healthcare into its environmental education programs beginning in Chinautla.
- **San Marcos representatives**, who have expressed interest in organizing an event focused on providing care for migrants.
- **Club de Leones in Chiquimula**, an emerging partnership that presents another opportunity for future outreach.

With every mile, the mobile clinic carries more than medical equipment. It carries hope, partnership, and the belief that where someone lives should never determine the care they receive.



A Clearer Picture:

New Imaging Technology at Obras Sociales del Santo Hermano

Clarity can change the course of care. Clearer images can lead to faster and more accurate answers. And that can lead to results that make a difference for patients and families in need of medical treatment.

This level of clarity is now within reach for **Obras Sociales del Santo Hermano Pedro (OSSHP)**.

In October 2025, **HRF and Heart Abroad** donated a Siemens Somatom AS Digital 7 128-slice CT scanner and UPS system to OSSHP, strengthening its ability to provide more thorough, quality diagnoses and treatment to families in Guatemala.

In keeping with the faith-based organization's tradition, a ceremony commenced with an official blessing of the scanner.

Continuing a Legacy of Service in Antigua

OSSHP was founded by members of the Franciscan order in 1979. Since its humble beginnings in a crumbling colonial-era building provided by the municipality, it's grown from a 12-bed location into a vital source of care for residents of Antigua and surrounding communities.

Four decades later, OSSHP now provides a permanent home to **400 individuals** of all ages with disabilities. In addition, its medical clinic cares for approximately **350,000 patients** and performs around **7,000 surgical procedures** each year.

Building on a Partnership

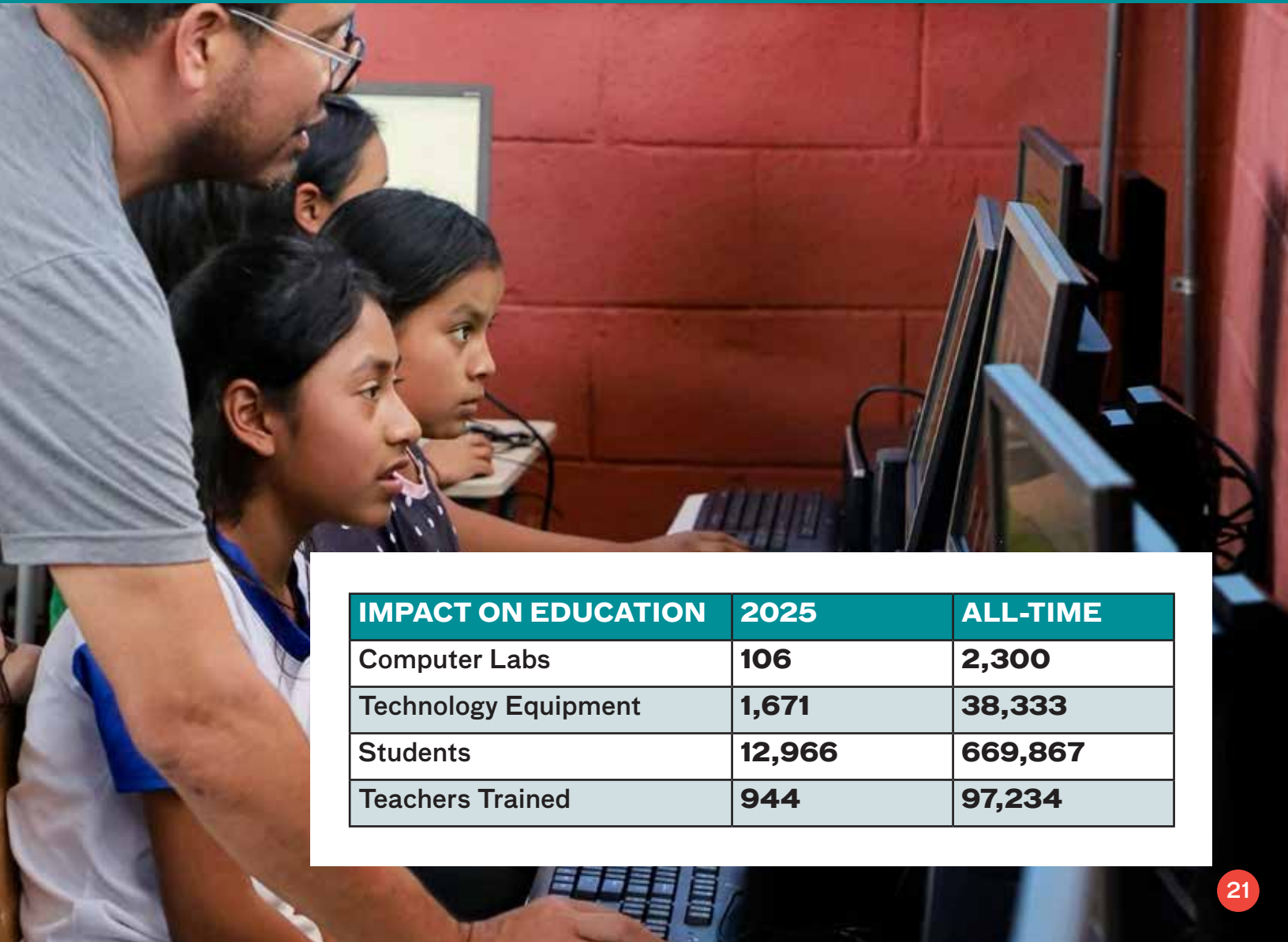
IMO has partnered with OSSHP for the past eight years, supporting its mission through contributions ranging from commercial kitchen equipment for the resident home to medical equipment and office furniture for new clinical spaces. Around 150 hospital beds and countless medical consumables have also been provided.

HRF is proud to share this history of service with the donation of the new CT scanner and UPS system, helping OSSHP usher in a new era of diagnostics and moving patients from uncertainty to clarity.

Tools for Tomorrow:

FUNSEPA Expands Digital Access & Teacher Training

It's been more than a decade since IMO and the **Sergio Paiz Andrade Foundation (FUNSEPA)** first joined forces. And this past year, they proved just how much impact the right partnership can make. Their efforts have had an undeniable impact on education and literacy in Guatemala.



IMPACT ON EDUCATION	2025	ALL-TIME
Computer Labs	106	2,300
Technology Equipment	1,671	38,333
Students	12,966	669,867
Teachers Trained	944	97,234



However, with each stride, there's still **opportunity to reach the next level.** They're now championing innovative approaches to **maximize their reach** to classrooms, teachers, and entire communities.

In 2020, the primary school completion rate was documented at 81% with the secondary school enrollment rate at 50%. Just two years prior, an estimated 65% of 10-year-olds were unable to comprehend simple texts after completing primary school.

These statistics spurred FUNSEPA and IMO to step in with resources. At first, the mission was simple: computer donations for public schools. But it became clear that equipment alone wasn't enough, so they sought to expand true technology access.

Secure spaces, internet access, and reliable electricity topped the list of necessities to turn the computers into true learning tools. Beyond that, teachers would need proper training to integrate the digital tools into their classrooms with confidence. By starting the "Technology to Educate" program, FUNSEPA began a targeted mission to bridge that gap.

Going Beyond Donations to Community Transformation

This past year saw the expansion of FUNSEPA's Digital Municipalities model, pairing equipment with teacher support and community access. With it, technology becomes an authentic learning tool.

Today, five municipalities are advancing through the network:

- Santa Cruz Verapaz
- Chiché
- San Jorge
- Almolonga
- San Martín Zapotitlán

Santa Cruz Verapaz became Guatemala's 14th Digital Municipality and the first in the Department of Alta Verapaz. The initiative equipped **32 public-sector educational centers** with **475 devices**, directly benefiting **5,824 students** and **257 teachers**. Its Community Technology Center extended digital access beyond the classroom and into the community.

Naturally, teacher training remains the heart of this progress. FUNSEPA's work recognizes that devices alone are not the finish line. Bolstering tech with the skills, support, and expertise to use it well creates lasting impact.

This is reflected in Na'at, FUNSEPA's educational platform supporting project-based learning. Through it, students take a proactive role in their education and teachers are empowered with another tool for classroom innovation. FUNSEPA shared this modern approach across six community-level Na'at Project Fairs in 2025, training **73 teachers** through the platform.



Belize





A Heartfelt Impact: Continuing to Expand Cardiac Care Throughout Belize

Last year, the Belize Cardiac Program opened a groundbreaking new chapter for the country's underserved populations.

Building upon the mission we started in 2011, the Heineman-Robicsek Foundation (HRF), Atrium Health, and Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (KHHM) in Belize City were joined by experts from SHVI and Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist to enhance the Belize Cardiac Program.

In 2025, continued support from **Edwards Lifesciences Foundation, SHVI, friends of HRF, and in-kind donations** allowed us to make even greater strides in delivering advanced cardiac care throughout Belize.



Teaming Up for Transformation

Monthly rotations by dedicated volunteer cardiology and cardiac surgery teams have helped the local Belize cardiac teams at KHHM ensure the highest quality care through continued training. This level of teamwork, unprecedented in the area, has a ripple effect that will improve patient and community care for years to come.

These monthly rotations have proven how great of an impact a contribution can make. We've seen firsthand the advancement of cardiac care in Belize, far beyond what was imaginable when our mission here first began.



Building Upon Lifesaving Milestones

Each visit from the SHVI teams comes with hands-on training, lifesaving procedures, and a fostering of deep collaboration between the U.S. and Belizean medical communities. The achievements we've celebrated together are plentiful, including the first Code STEMI procedures, off-pump coronary artery bypass surgeries, and on-table, post-heart surgery extubations in the country.

In 2025, we celebrated even more achievements with **514 catheterizations** and **91 cardiac surgeries** completed over fifteen years.

With each advancement, we applaud not only the clinical excellence and expertise of the KHMH team, but their ever-increasing ability to conduct these complex procedures independently.

Contributing to Improved Cardiac Care

These procedures are made possible through the essential industry product donation grants we receive. We're grateful to have received in-kind donations in 2025 with an **estimated value of over \$121,000**.

With each year of partnership and volunteerism, advanced cardiac care in Belize progresses further, and we look forward to the achievements made throughout 2026.

Our 2025 Volunteers

Thanks for Putting Your HEART into Your Work

Jill Addison

Joe Basha

Renee Buck

John Cedarholm, M.D.

Scott Coleman, M.D.

Mindy Couper

Glen Fandetti, M.D.

Mary Beth Ferguson

Christian Foster

Chandrika Garner, M.D.

Chloe Grau

Britt Hensel

Stephanie Houser

Paul Jellum

Christopher Jesse

Glen Kowalchuk, M.D.

Choy Lewis, M.D.

Bryan Marchant, M.D.

Miari Monahan

Stephen Palacio

Chad Panick

Nashita Patel, M.D.

Darian Rice, M.D.

Michael Rinaldi, M.D.

Jonathan Schwartz, M.D.

Eric Skipper, M.D.

Winston Thomas, M.D.

Kristina Watts

Critical Care Observership: A Journey of Two Nurses



When **Rushelle Rivers, R.N., B.S.N.**, and **Samuel Tush, R.N.**, boarded the plane from Belize to Charlotte, NC, they couldn't have predicted the week ahead.

The two cardiothoracic intensive care unit (CTICU) nurses from KMH in Belize had been selected for a week-long observership at Atrium Health Carolinas Medical Center (CMC), an opportunity that would allow them a unique, firsthand experience to further their training.

Kristina Watts and Britt Hensel, leaders of the KMH CTICU education program, had arranged for Rivers and Tush to shadow and observe their daily critical care activities.

Observing Ways to Improve Patient Care

There are lessons best learned via educational rotations. And undoubtedly, Rivers and Tush discovered new approaches to patient care from the direct observation of best practices.

Although the observership packed a lot of information into a short period of time, both nurses maximized their visit with takeaways directly applicable to their ICU back home.



“It is my hope that whatever we had observed, we could also practice at KHMH.”

- Rushelle Rivers, R.N., B.S.N.



For Rivers, the difference was apparent right from intake. Applauding the camaraderie and connectivity among the staff, she shared, “**I love the team efforts displayed during the admission process and in the continuity of care,**” recognizing the role strong communication can play in enhancing patient experiences. She placed particular emphasis on the bedside manner and thoroughness of the nursing and physician rounds, adding with enthusiasm,

“The nursing care is awesome.”

Tush continued the sentiment, expressing that the team dynamics and nurse-patient relationships were exemplary, with “**thorough head-to-toe documentation**” that he looks forward to implementing at KHMH.

“[The observership] built the encouragement to apply the same techniques in our own ICU to improve patient outcomes.”

- Samuel Tush, R.N.

Making Strides in Post-Operative Management

One particular observation stood out for Tush as he shadowed in the operating theater and post-operative management wing. As he witnessed patients move through the post-op process, he realized the difference “**early mobilization and...pulmonary exercise of post-op patients**” can make. He returned to Belize with the confidence and empowerment to implement similar techniques and improve patient responses.



Sharing New Experiences Beyond Medicine

The group at CMC also scheduled time to show Tush and Rivers a bit of southern hospitality.

From sampling local cuisines to a group bowling trip and even a classic North Carolina cookout, the group finished out the week with unforgettable memories that showed how shared experiences can foster tight-knit fellowship among colleagues.

Renewed with excitement and a refreshed outlook, Rivers and Tush look forward to leveraging what they learned at CMC to take patient care and team culture to new heights back home at KHHM.

Bedside Manner: 3 KHMH Nurses Earn ECCO Certification



The CTICU nurse team at KHMH – Tanya Bennett, R.N., Rushelle Rivers, R.N., B.S.N., and Samuel Tush, R.N. – strengthened their critical care skills through an educational journey with the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN), which graciously gifted three licensed seats to the nurses for two years.

Each nurse completed Essentials of Critical Care Orientation (ECCO), an intensive 18-module online specialty course covering cardiovascular disorders, pulmonary disorders, hemodynamic monitoring, and other critical care subjects that support sustainable, high-quality bedside care for cardiac patients.

The course, along with Britt Hensel's mentorship and bi-weekly virtual meetings to review the modules, allowed them to put what they learned into practice during cardiac surgery team rotations.

Bennett, Rivers, and Tush completed their studies and received their AACN ECCO certifications in November 2025. Their dedication and perseverance are a proud example of how education, mentorship, and hands-on application can strengthen cardiac care for patients in Belize.

Every Heartbeat Matters:

Elizabeth Trapp's Story

When **Elizabeth “Betty” Trapp** was a young girl, her father – the most influential person in her life – told her she would have heart problems because she was such an emotional child. Although he may have been speaking metaphorically at the time, he would turn out to be correct. Before she was even 40 years old, Elizabeth suffered her first heart attack during an exercise class.

In 2017, Elizabeth experienced her second major heartbreak when her husband, Egbert Lincoln Trapp, passed away from cancer. But the rest of her family – six children, 36 grandchildren, and 17 great-grandchildren – would give her the strength to not only endure, but to open her home to those in need. Her son, Kendale, describes Elizabeth as a woman with a heart of gold. However, that heart would break once again.



“I would have died a long time ago,” Elizabeth said, “but God put doctors into my life who could fix my heart.”



“You Have Six Months”

For many years, Elizabeth’s heart condition remained under control with medication. But in 2022, she began experiencing chest pains and shortness of breath. Her primary care physician prescribed additional medication, but seeing no improvement, she sought out the advice of a local cardiologist. They told her she had a severe heart condition that could be helped by nothing except rest. If she didn’t, they warned, she wouldn’t make it past six months.

She went to stay with Kendale in southern Belize. Despite following doctor’s orders to rest, shortly after returning home she suffered a major heart attack. Kendale feared that “the end was coming and we needed to say goodbye.”

Mending a Broken Heart

After the heart attack, Elizabeth was wheelchair-bound, too weak to walk and extremely short of breath. Despite her resistance to going to the hospital, her daughter, Erleen, convinced her to visit **KHMH**, where she received a full cardiac assessment from Dr. Jeff Lin. From there, Dr. Lin discussed her case with KHMH cardiac surgeon Dr. Adrian Coye with the goal of determining if Elizabeth was a candidate for surgery.

Cardiac catheterization confirmed valvular heart disease and Elizabeth was scheduled for aortic valve replacement surgery using an **Edwards Lifesciences** heart valve.

In June 2023, she underwent the procedure, performed by Dr. Coye and his team, with support from Dr. Eric Skipper and teams from **SHVI** and **Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center**.

Elizabeth’s recovery was nothing short of remarkable. Aside from a few hypertensive episodes, she is doing well and has returned to everyday life with no major limitations, spending time with her large family, attending church, and sharing her heart of gold with others.

A First for Every Heartbeat Matters

In May 2025, **Edwards Lifesciences Foundation** recognized Elizabeth through its **Every Heartbeat Matters** program during The Patient Experience event in Irvine, California. While Edwards Patient Engagement had typically focused on patients in the U.S. who received Edwards technology, this marked the first time an international patient’s story would be shared at the event.

Elizabeth and her son, Kendale, traveled to Irvine and joined Dr. Coye and Dr. Skipper for a heartfelt reunion. They shared Elizabeth’s journey before and after receiving her new heart valve, a true testament to what advanced cardiac care can mean for patients, families, and the teams who make it all possible.

The event was a full-circle moment for so many. In attendance were several who were personally connected to and moved by Elizabeth’s incredible story, including the Edwards Pro Bono Corp team who supported the IMO cardiac program in Belize in 2023, Edwards’ employees, benefactors, and friends of the organization.

Prior to her successful surgery, Elizabeth and her family were bracing themselves for the worst. Now, with every heartbeat, she carries the story of a life extended and a future made possible through partnership.

Collaboration in Care:

Advancing Clinical Education in Belize

A new international collaboration is creating opportunities for advanced clinical training and helping strengthen the long-term sustainability of cardiac care in Belize.

During the 2025 Every Heartbeat Matters Partner Summit, hosted by the Edwards Lifesciences Foundation in Irvine, California, HRF was introduced to the **Magdi Yacoub Global Heart Foundation (GHF)**, founded by world-renowned cardiothoracic surgeon Professor Sir Magdi Yacoub.

GHF works to expand access to quality healthcare for vulnerable patients while advancing medical research and developing the skills of healthcare professionals.

The introduction led GHF, HRF, and KMH to explore specialized education opportunities for Belize's cardiac team. As a result, KMH's anesthesiologist, cardiologist, perfusionist and cardiothoracic surgeon will travel to Egypt in 2026 and 2027 for advanced training.



This important opportunity will help **advance local cardiac care expertise** and bring Belize's medical community one step closer to **a more comprehensive, independent future.**

An Eye-Opening Experience:

U.S. Pre-Med Students Intern in Belize

Hazel Silverstein's first experience with IMO was in 2023. She was on summer break in high school and had been assigned to work in various support positions at SHVI through the Mayor's Youth Employment Program in Charlotte, NC. She had no idea how much that summer would change the trajectory of her life.

Hazel had always been passionate about helping others, and after visiting the HRF warehouse and shadowing Theresa Johnson, HRF executive director and director of IMO, something clicked. She realized that IMO encompassed everything that interested her: helping communities with limited access to medical care, supporting sustainable change, and seeing the world through the eyes of different cultures.

Two years later, during her sophomore year at Elon University where she was now double majoring in Public Health and International & Global Studies, she returned to SHVI for a summer internship working with IMO.



“The first time I stepped into the [HRF] warehouse, I was stunned. Shelves overflowed with medical equipment...[that] would soon transform cardiology care for communities thousands of miles away.”

- Hazel Silverstein



An Unexpected Opportunity

On the first day of her internship, Hazel was asked a question she did not expect: “Would you like to go to Belize?”

Before she knew it, she was helping organize an educational outreach trip with four other pre-med students: Ben Rose of Brown University, Caroline Owen of the University of North Carolina, Charles De Mey of Northwestern University, and Conall Monahan, a North Carolina State University graduate.

An Education in Underserved Communities

Their week included clinical outreach, hospital observation, and hands-on learning alongside healthcare professionals in Belize.

The students quickly saw the challenges facing patients and providers, including limited equipment, few intensive care beds, and long travel distances for medical care. At KHHM, they also observed how local teams never let those constraints stop them from caring for patients.

“It wasn’t about having everything; it was about doing the best with what was available.”

- Caroline Owen

Gaining Invaluable Outreach Experience

Hazel helped organize an outreach event at Twin Towns Specialty Clinic & Wellness Center in Santa Elena. Under the guidance of Atrium Health nurse Miari Monahan, the students took patient histories, recorded vital signs, and completed initial assessments.

Patients were then seen by a medical team that included Dr. Eric Skipper of SHVI and physician assistant Mike Martinez, who owns and operates the clinic. The students observed examinations, discussed possible diagnoses, and learned how treatment decisions are made when resources and specialty care are limited.

“Many of these patients were severely underprivileged, and their only opportunity to see a doctor is when there are free clinics.”

- Conall Monahan



“While some people might be frustrated by a lack of resources or access, all the doctors and nurses we talked with expressed deep commitment to their patients and improving the care they offer.”

- *Charles De Mey*

Greater Awareness of Global Health

During the trip, the students gained greater awareness of healthcare inequities and a profound respect for the resourcefulness and commitment of Belize’s medical professionals.

Observing the Power of Partnership

The interns also spent time in KMHM’s catheterization laboratory and operating room, helping with patient preparation and observing procedures and postoperative care.

They saw that successful treatment depended not only on clinical skill, but also on communication, inventory management, teamwork, and coordination between Belizean and visiting medical professionals. Perhaps most importantly, they witnessed our mission in action: supporting care today while helping Belize’s healthcare teams strengthen their own long-term capacity.

“Everything I learned and saw changed how I view medicine and how I envision myself as a physician.”

- *Ben Rose*

The experience confirmed that global health extends far beyond traveling abroad or delivering short-term assistance. It requires listening, collaboration, education and sustained investment in local healthcare systems.

The students traveled to Belize hoping to contribute. They returned with a deeper understanding of how sustainable healthcare partnerships work – and of the roles they may one day play in strengthening them.

“This experience has been nothing short of life changing.”

- *Hazel Silverstein*



Barbados



Heart of Gold:

A Life-Saving Surgery in Barbados

For years, Karen Haynes lived with the debilitating effects of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM), a genetic condition affecting the heart's main pumping chamber.

Once active and energized by the life she loved in Barbados, the 52-year-old guidance counselor began struggling with movements that once felt simple: walking, climbing stairs, and responding quickly to student emergencies. Even beachside walks with her husband, one of her favorite forms of self-care, became difficult as her shortness of breath and fatigue worsened.



What Is Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy?

HCM causes the walls of the left ventricle to become thick and stiff, making it harder for the heart to fill and pump enough blood to meet the body's needs.

Karen researched her condition, attended webinars, and searched for answers. She eventually learned that surgery might offer her the best chance at reclaiming her health.

Relatives in the United States connected her with [SHVI](#), where she met virtually with Dr. Dermot Phelan. In March 2023, Karen traveled to Charlotte, North Carolina, for advanced testing.

The results revealed that she was at high risk of sudden cardiac death.

In Need of a Miracle

Karen returned to Barbados with a defibrillator, but her condition continued to decline.

She needed a septal myectomy, a complex procedure that removes part of the thickened heart muscle to improve blood flow. However, no surgeon in Barbados had experience performing it.

Traveling back to the United States for surgery was financially out of reach, and her insurance classified the condition as pre-existing, leaving the cost of care uncovered.

Then, as she described it, a miracle happened.

IMO worked with [Atrium Health's Global Health Care](#) to help bring the surgical team to her.

A House Call to Barbados

Cardiothoracic surgeon Dr. Larry Watts traveled to Queen Elizabeth Hospital with perfusionist Mindy Couper and scrub technician Kayla Boutross. They worked alongside local cardiothoracic surgeon Dr. Alan Smith, anesthesiologist Dr. Michael Fakoory and interventional cardiologist Dr. Dawn Scantlebury to perform [Barbados' first septal myectomy](#).

The procedure was more than a successful surgery for one patient. It marked an important milestone for cardiac care in Barbados and demonstrated what is possible when medical teams share their expertise across borders.

"Technology is just amazing and allows for the global collaborative efforts towards the treatment of these patients."

– Mindy Couper, Perfusionist

Dr. Phelan also supported the team from Charlotte, using FaceTime to provide real-time guidance during critical moments of the procedure. The technology connected the operating room in Barbados with specialized expertise more than 2,000 miles away.

For Dr. Watts, the experience required both clinical skill and respect. He compared it to entering someone else's home and learning to work thoughtfully within their space. He described the Barbados team as gracious, engaged, and eager to learn.

The surgery also built on the team's previous global outreach work. After supporting a similar procedure in Belize the year before, Dr. Watts and his colleagues were helping expand access to advanced cardiac care elsewhere in the Caribbean.

Hope for the Future

Karen's surgery was a success. The shortness of breath, fatigue, and fear that had shaped her life for years began to subside. She could once again look forward to teaching her students, spending time with her husband, and walking along the beach.

"I now have the opportunity to live again."

– Karen Haynes

For Karen, the surgery offered a second chance. For Barbados, it established a new precedent.



Her story also reflects the expertise of **SHVI's Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy Center of Excellence**, which provides comprehensive diagnostics, advanced treatments, and clinical trial access for patients living with HCM.

More broadly, Karen's experience shows how global health partnerships, technology, and clinical expertise can bring advanced care closer to patients who need it. It also provides a model for future collaboration and the development of more sustainable cardiac care throughout the Caribbean.

Karen hopes her story will help create those opportunities. Other patients in Barbados and across the region still face many of the same barriers she encountered, and she hopes they will one day be able to receive this level of care closer to home.

For the medical teams involved, the surgery proved the combination of compassion and technology can cross borders in powerful ways.

For Karen, it meant returning to the life she loves – and breathing more freely with every step.

Research: Planting Seeds for Progress

Each year, the **HRF James H. Heineman Endowment**, along with **The Heineman Foundation for Research, Educational, Charitable and Scientific Purposes, Inc.**, awards seed grants to a carefully selected cohort of research candidates. These emerging innovators are pursuing ideas with the potential to move medicine forward, and early support can be a critical step in gaining traction.

These grants help researchers lay the foundation of discovery to pursue larger grants from major research institutions and funding organizations in the future. In that way, each seed grant acts as a starting point for progress and the next generation of care.





Jai Singh, M.D.

Director of Cardio-Oncology, SHVI

Research: An Integrated Cardio-Oncology Surgical Heart Team: A Multidisciplinary Model for Cardiothoracic Surgery in Cancer Patients

When cancer and heart disease overlap, treatment becomes more complex. Cancer therapies can affect the heart, while heart surgery may increase risks for patients undergoing or recovering from cancer treatment.

Dr. Singh's research brings heart and cancer specialists together through a dedicated cardio-oncology team. Each case is being reviewed collaboratively to identify the safest, most effective treatment path.

The team is analyzing past cases and tracking new ones to **better understand surgical outcomes, identify patterns, and guide future care**. This coordinated approach could reduce treatment risks and help specialists make more informed decisions for patients whose care extends beyond a single diagnosis.



Dhananjaya Pal, Ph.D.

Research Instructor, Atrium
Health Levine Cancer Institute

Research: Preclinical Development of Novel Triple (CDK4/6-PI3K-BRD4) Inhibitor for the Treatment of MYCN-amplified Neuroblastoma

Cancer is devastating at any age. But when it affects children, the search for safer, more effective treatments carries even greater urgency. Pediatric neuroblastoma is the most common solid tumor outside the brain in children. While low- and intermediate-risk cases have strong survival rates, high-risk neuroblastoma remains difficult to treat, with a five-year survival rate of about 50%.

Many high-risk cases involve amplification of the MYCN gene, which makes the cancer more aggressive and resistant to treatment. Even with newer therapies, nearly half of these patients relapse.

Dr. Pal's research explores whether one engineered molecule can target three cancer-driving pathways at once: CDK4/6, PI3K and BRD4. The lead candidate, LCI132, is being tested in neuroblastoma models to determine whether it can **match or improve combination therapies while reducing toxicity**.

This work could deepen understanding of how high-risk neuroblastoma progresses and resists treatment while advancing a promising therapy toward clinical use.



Karl Welke, M.D.

Clinical Associate Professor of
Cardiothoracic Surgery, Atrium Health
Levine Children's Hospital

*Research: Characterizing the Global
Congenital Cardiac Surgery Landscape:
Capacity, Challenges, and Opportunities*

Congenital heart disease is the world's most common birth defect and causes nearly 300,000 deaths each year. Although outcomes have improved in wealthier countries, many underserved regions still lack access to surgery because of limited resources, infrastructure, and expertise.

Dr. Welke's team is using AI-driven searches, professional networks, surveys, and interviews to identify hospitals performing congenital heart surgery and assess their capacity, staffing, procedures, and challenges.

The findings will support an online global database and map showing where care is available and what capacity exists at each center. This resource could guide investment, training, collaboration, and future research while helping families locate care.

The goal is a future where every child, regardless of birthplace, has a stronger chance of **receiving the life-saving heart surgery they need.**



Bartlomiej R. Imielski, M.D.

'24 & '25 Recipient
Assistant Professor, Wake Forest School
of Medicine

*Research: Renin-Angiotensin-Aldosterone
System Response to Cardiopulmonary Bypass
in Patients with Vasoplegia*

Vasoplegia affects up to one in five open-heart surgery patients, causing dangerously low blood pressure that can lead to kidney injury, organ dysfunction, prolonged hospitalization, and death.

Building on earlier HRF-supported research, Dr. Imielski's team is studying whether a weakened response in the body's blood pressure-regulating system contributes to the condition. Using serum and urine samples, the team is examining small RNA particles that may influence this response in patients with and without vasoplegia.

The findings could clarify what causes vasoplegia to develop, support earlier treatment trials with Angiotensin II, and ultimately provide physicians with a critical window to **intervene before vasoplegia becomes life-threatening.**



Chiquita: Delivering Hope & Healing



Since 2013, Chiquita Brands International and HRF have worked together to expand access to healthcare and education across Central America.

By donating shipping containers and covering transportation costs, Chiquita helps HRF move critical medical equipment, supplies, and technology to hospitals, clinics, and schools that need them most.





To date, the partnership has delivered more than 110 containers across four countries, representing an estimated \$770,000 in donated shipping services.

That support has helped make lasting change possible. Chiquita-assisted shipments have strengthened rural cardiac screening programs, expanded a neonatal and pediatric intensive care unit in Guatemala from 10 beds to 36, equipped new operating rooms, modernized surgical facilities in Honduras, and delivered computers and technology to underserved schools and communities.

Beyond transporting equipment, Chiquita helps bridge the distance between available resources and the people who can benefit from them. Together, Chiquita and HRF are delivering hope, healing, and dignity throughout the region.



Satori Marketing:

Sharing the Message Behind the Mission

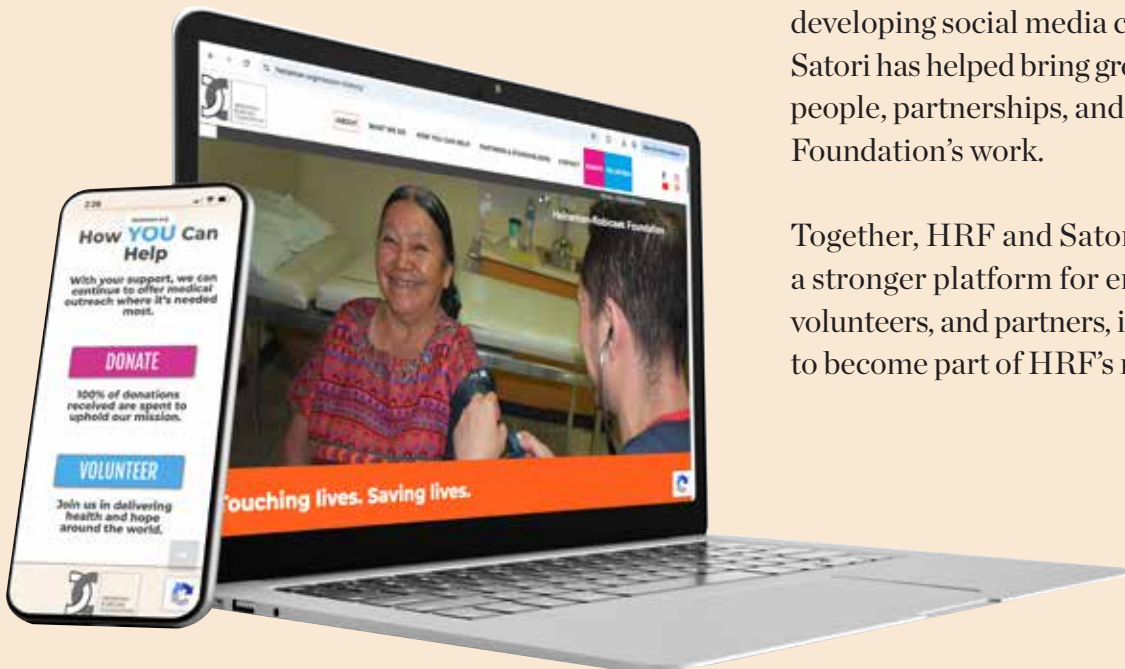
The relationship between Satori Marketing and HRF is rooted in a shared commitment to helping HRF's mission reach further and inspire people beyond borders.



Through strategic messaging, digital communications, and thoughtful storytelling, Satori has helped HRF clearly communicate its work to expand access to healthcare, support international medical outreach, and strengthen communities throughout Latin America.

From modernizing HRF's website to developing social media content and videos, Satori has helped bring greater visibility to the people, partnerships, and impact behind the Foundation's work.

Together, HRF and Satori have created a stronger platform for engaging donors, volunteers, and partners, inviting more people to become part of HRF's mission.



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Note: *Steven A. Robicsek, M.D., Ph.D., served as President until September 2025, when the organization underwent a leadership transition. HRF is deeply grateful for Dr. Robicsek's steadfast dedication and diligent leadership over the past five years.*

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Vision for the Future

In 2025 the HRF Executive Committee developed a detailed long range Strategic Plan and formalized a subcommittee infrastructure by functional areas to facilitate the growth and operational efficiency of the Foundation. The five subcommittees are: Governance, Finance, Medical Research, Medical Outreach, and Fundraising. Each subcommittee reports their recommendations to the Executive Committee who ultimately approves the recommendation, requests revisions, or moves the matter to the Board of Directors for review and approval. An important byproduct of this effort was the modernization of the Foundation's by-laws, guidelines, and mission statement.



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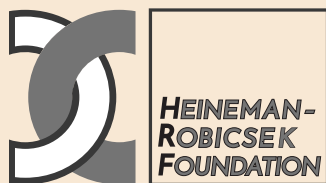
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About Heineman-Robicsek Foundation

Heineman-Robicsek Foundation, Inc. (HRF) has been supporting medical research since 1940 and humanitarian projects since the 1970's. HRF was best known for its national and international achievements in research, as well as medical achievements in the Southeast. HRF later added medical and educational assistance programs to its portfolio, to promote sustainable healthcare services and enhance living standards globally. HRF addresses the global disparity gap in healthcare by donating and shipping medical equipment and supplies to Latin American countries in need. HRF's educational programs bring together clinicians from the U.S. and other countries to share best practices, sponsor health screenings, promote public awareness of pressing healthcare concerns and support modernization of healthcare facilities. HRF maintains close working relations with Advocate Health partners: Atrium Health, Atrium Health Sanger Heart & Vascular Institute, Atrium Health Wake Forest University Medical Center, - in addition to Chiquita Brands International S.à.r.l., Heineman Foundation of New York, and other philanthropic organizations and individuals. HRF also collects and delivers computers for public schools in rural Guatemala. Heineman-Robicsek Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization and contributions are tax deductible.

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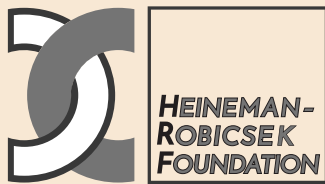


Atrium Health

About Atrium Health

Atrium Health is advancing clinical care and research across the communities it serves by redefining care for all. Atrium Health Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte, which includes Levine Children's Hospital, Levine Cancer Institute and Sanger Heart & Vascular Institute; and Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist in Winston-Salem, which includes Brenner Children's Hospital and Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Comprehensive Cancer Center. Together, these academic medical centers support a statewide network of 19 hospitals, more than 1,060 care locations serving communities across North Carolina. It is part of Charlotte, North Carolina-based **Advocate Health**, the third-largest nonprofit, integrated health system in the United States. Advocate Health is a preeminent academic health system at the forefront of clinical excellence, innovation and research, with **Wake Forest University School of Medicine** serving as its academic core. Nationally recognized for expertise in heart and vascular, neurosciences, oncology, pediatrics and rehabilitation, Advocate Health is also a pioneer in the delivery of virtual health care. It's accelerating discovery by making research participation part of the standard-of-care through its one-of-a-kind **National Center for Clinical Trials**. Advocate Health has one of the nation's largest graduate medical education programs, with an experiential learning focus and specialized residencies to help protect the long-term sustainability of rural health care in America. Each campus of the school of medicine has an affiliated life-sciences focused innovation district: **The Pearl**, in Charlotte, and **Innovation Quarter**, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. With more than 165,000 teammates serving patients at 69 hospitals and over 1,000 care locations across eight states, Advocate Health reinvests over \$6 billion each year to improve community health, making it one of the nation's largest providers of community benefit.





Atrium Health