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# Healing Hands: Charlevoix graduate makes a difference in the world



Dylan Stewart (center), co-founder of the Healing Hands Foundation, works on a patient during a November 2010 trip to Guatemala. (COURTESY PHOTO)

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By Rachel Brougham News-Review Staff Writer  
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As director of pediatric trauma at Johns Hopkins Children's Center in Baltimore, Md., Dylan Stewart improves the lives of children each day.

He works on some of the most delicate cases, yet still felt the need to do more.

So Stewart, a 1989 graduate of Charlevoix High School, helped found the Healing Hands Foundation four years ago. As part of the organization, Stewart leads a group of fellow doctors and volunteers to some of the most impoverished parts of the world. There, they deliver medical care to many, who otherwise, may never receive the care they desperately need.

"When you go on one of these trips, you see many with heartbreaking conditions," said Dylan's father, James Stewart, a family practitioner in Charlevoix. "And when you get home, it's all you think about. You just want to do more."

Stewart first joined his son on a medical mission to Guatemala late last year. He's planning to return to Guatemala for his second trip this November.

While in Guatemala in 2010, the organization performed 50 major surgeries, nearly 200 dental procedures, 500 medical consultations and donated nearly \$100,000 in medical supplies. The volunteers also donated toys and clothing to an orphanage.

The Healing Hands Foundation has also traveled on medical missions to Colombia and Sierra Leone and there are plans to expand into other countries as well.

"While Dylan was in a fellowship in pediatrics at Johns Hopkins, they had a program where they went to Ecuador to help perform medical procedures," Stewart explained. "I think his idea for the Healing Hands Foundation really spun out of that."

Word of the organization has spread, and this past fall, the Healing Hands Foundation was featured in the "Making a Difference" segment of NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams.

"When Dylan asked me last August if I wanted to go with him on a mission, I just couldn't say no -- it just felt so good that he asked me," Stewart said.

None of the volunteers receive any pay for their services and everyone pays their own way, including travel expenses.

Volunteers see a variety of cases ranging from mild to severe, including cleft lips and palates and even severe burns.

After all the surgeries are completed, the area is opened up as a community clinic.

"The hospital in Guatemala we work out of is only open when an aid group comes in," Stewart explained. "We have no lab, no x-ray capabilities, no heat and only running cold water. And the electricity fails on occasion."

Volunteers carry everything with them, including medicine, bandages and other supplies.

Despite the harsh conditions, Stewart said he's anxiously awaiting his next trip this November. He's anxious to help more people with his son by his side.

"These people have absolutely nothing -- these kids have absolutely nothing," he said. "It's a life changing experience to help them."

To learn more about the Healing Hands Foundation and how you can help, visit [www.thhfoundation.org](http://www.thhfoundation.org).

Rachel Brougham

(231) 439-9348 - rbrougham@petoskeynews.com

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