

Wayland nurse takes healthcare expertise, servantâs heart to Brazil

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Josie Gomez and most of the medical mission team gather for a group photo on the boat that took them to their remote patients each day while in Brazil. Pictured are (back row, from left) a German missionary to Brazil; Gomez; Donna Winchester, dentist; Pastor Kenneth Winchester of Slaton; Gordon Wurster, a pharmacist from Lubbock; Ron Hanby, a CPA from Plainview; Hugh Wilson, a physician from Lubbock; (front row, from left) Luiz Alcantara, a physician from Brazil; Renata Bubanc, a pastor's wife from Brazil; and Adrienne Laramore, a physical therapist from Lubbock.

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By **Teresa Young**

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LAINVIEW—Josie Gomez normally sees dozens of [Wayland Baptist University](#) students and employees in a typical week.

But recently, her caseload increased significantly. Fortunately, Gomez didn't have to meet the needs alone.

She took a week off from her job in Plainview as Wayland's full-time registered nurse and traveled to Brazil for a medical mission trip with other area medical professionals.

Gomez, a member of First Baptist Church in Hale Center, found out about the coming trip through a presentation by Gene Meacham, director of missions for Caprock-Plains Baptist Area.



Josie Gomez (right) helps another patient into a boat for consultation and treatment during the team's long days of running a medical clinic aboard the boat docked in remote areas of Brazil that normally lack medical care.

"I felt like this would be where I could use the talents God gave me for him," said Gomez, who has been at Wayland nine years. Though international mission trips were nothing new to Gomez—she has been to Mexico and Brazil before—this trip held a new twist for the longtime nurse.

The mission was conducted almost exclusively aboard a boat as part of the Evangelistic Mission Assistance to Fishermen project. The team of 12 short-term missionaries included Lubbock physician Hugh Wilson, formerly of Hale Center; dentist Donna Winchester of Slaton; two other nurses; a speech therapist; a physical therapist and several others.

The group traveled each day from Isla Grande off the coast of central Brazil to remote villages where no medical assistance regularly is available. Luiz Alcantara, a physician from Brazil, traveled with them to provide translation and additional medical help.

Docked a short distance from the shore, the boat became a clinic for the villagers who traveled to wait for help. Lines formed quickly and stayed long for most of each day.

"It was very busy. People were in and out all day long for four days straight," Gomez said. "We used every part of that boat to see people and treat them. We treated lots of intestinal worms, anemia and some scabies, and the dentist pulled teeth left and right because their dental hygiene was not good."

Gomez noted that while the medical team stayed on board to run the clinic,

others traveled into the villages to meet people and share the gospel message in various ways. Flexibility and creativity proved valuable for the team.

“One day the wind was too high, and we had to move the clinic into an elementary school on the island,” Gomez recalled. “When we heard that morning we might not get to stay on the boat, we prayed and prayed for God to calm the storm. But we ended up in the school anyway, and it was such a blessing. I think God had already planned this ahead for us.”

While the clinic continued on more solid ground, the rest of the team made good use of their time closer to the villagers. Ron Hanby, an accountant from Plainview, presented a paint talk for a group, using an illustration on large canvas to share the gospel story.

Gomez fondly re-called the blessings she gained from being able to use her medical expertise on the mission field.

“The biggest blessing for me came from giving a shot to one lady who could barely walk from painful arthritis and had been that way for eight months,” she noted. “She said through the interpreter that it was the first shot she’d had that didn’t hurt, and the next day she came up to me and was saying, ‘Thank you’ and hugging me and telling me how she didn’t hurt anymore.”

Gomez also recalled one woman who brought her 14-year-old daughter to see the speech therapist, saying she had never spoken. Within a few hours of therapy, the girl was making simple noises and moving toward speech for the first time.

The incident—and others like it—made an impact on Gomez.

“I think we just take it for granted here, that we can just go down to a clinic and get medicine for any little thing. They can’t do that there.”

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