



Health Horizons  
International



## Note from the Executive Director



Greetings from the Dominican Republic and from Health Horizons International's new office in Montellano!

As I look around at our new surroundings – the new open-air meeting room, the new common area and office spaces, I reflect not on the physical changes that I see before me but on the more meaningful steps in organizational growth that HHI has taken in the past months. This new physical space that the HHI team finds ourselves in everyday is a representation of where we are as an organization and where we are going. With this organizational growth comes increased ability to improve health and well-being together with our expanding number of partner communities, and an

increased ability to affect positive change on policy and programs at higher government levels that will improve health for larger populations in the Dominican Republic.

As the American holiday of Thanksgiving is upon us, I am proud to share with you three examples of growth for which HHI is very thankful:

- 1) We have officially begun a new project funded by the World Diabetes Foundation. This two-year project is focused on improving Diabetes detection, care and follow-up in the Province of Puerto Plata. HHI is partnering with Population Services International and the Department of Chronic Disease of the Dominican Ministry of Public Health. (Read more about this exciting new project below.)
- 2) The expansion of our Healthy Lifestyle Program, Sano y Feliz, is under way. HHI is growing this program, which is focused on healthy behavior change to prevent chronic diseases like heart disease and diabetes, to the entire Municipality of Montellano. (Read more about the expansion of Sano y Feliz below.)
- 3) During this past quarter we have built up the HHI staff team to include highly qualified Dominican staff, switching from a majority international to a majority national staff team. First, Carlos Castillo, a former HHI patient and then Community Health Worker (CHW), was brought on full-time to a leadership position within the Clinical Programs, as the CHW Coordinator. (Read more below about Carlos.) Another exciting addition to the HHI team is Dr. Luis Rosa Sosa, who brings with him a wealth of experience working in international health around the globe. (Read more about Luis below.) These additions to the HHI team have brought invaluable perspective and have already enriched the work that we are

carrying out with our partner communities and with the Ministry of Public Health.

We are also thankful to be able to announce a recent \$25,000 matching challenge grant that will enable us to double any new or increased donation made to HHI. Our goal is to meet the \$25,000 match before the end of the 2014 calendar year. It is because of generous gifts like this one, and the many smaller individual gifts that HHI receives throughout the year, that we can continue to grow and improve health and health services here in the Dominican Republic.

I am personally thankful to be leading an organization made up of such dedicated, hard-working and talented people, and I look forward to being able to report many more exciting milestones of growth for the organization in the future. Our network of supporters like you is what makes all of this possible.

In gratitude,

Elizabeth Geier  
Executive Director

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## **Health Horizons International and Populations Services International Partner to Implement a New Project to Fight Diabetes in the Dominican Republic**



The World Diabetes Foundation is funding a two-year project that will enable HHI and Population Services International to help improve the response to diabetes in the Province of Puerto Plata. We will be providing training on diabetes treatment and follow-up to Dominican medical doctors who work in the public health system as well as training Health Promoters on how to do case finding and make referrals for people who are at risk for diabetes. The project will also focus on improving the medical supply chain from National to Provincial levels, specifically for medications and lab supplies that are needed for diabetes detection and treatment. Through this project HHI will begin to work at both the Provincial and National levels in the Dominican Republic. We will also have the opportunity to begin working on an international level by hosting an International Conference on Diabetes in Developing Countries during the second year of the project. By supporting the public health system's response to diabetes we will be improving the quality of treatment and follow-up that the poorest patients in the DR access and utilize.

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## HHI to Expand the Healthy Lifestyle Program Sano y Feliz

Sano y Feliz means 'Healthy and Happy' in Spanish. This new program, that has so far been tested out in one of HHI partner communities for the past year, is focused on preventing chronic diseases like diabetes by supporting the formation of community support groups made up of people at risk for developing chronic diseases and those people who have already developed a chronic disease to help prevent them from developing further complications.



The support groups are led by Community Health Workers trained by HHI and focus on finding local, accessible and culturally acceptable strategies to combat chronic disease in the Dominican Republic. During the meetings members share experiences about their efforts to improve their diet and exercise, they check their weight, and track their progress in achieving their health goals. Health

Horizons International is currently developing, in partnership with the Dominican Ministry of Public Health, a program to test out the Sano y Feliz model on a larger scale in order to scientifically evaluate the success of the Sano y Feliz strategy in promoting healthy behavior change and preventing chronic disease.

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## Carlos Castillo is Brought on Full-Time as HHI's Community Health Worker Coordinator

Carlos “Carlito” Castillo joined the HHI team full-time as the Community Health Worker (CHW) Coordinator in July of this year. Carlito originally became familiar with HHI in 2010 through a medical service trip in Pancho Mateo, where he and his family were patients. He became interested in the work of HHI and was invited by staff to participate in the next Community Health Worker (CHW) training. With his desire to learn new skills and help those in his community, Carlito excelled as a CHW and emerged as a natural leader among his peers. When the position of CHW Coordinator was created at HHI, Carlito applied and was ultimately selected. His new full-time position has brought more responsibilities and Carlito has once again proven himself as hardworking and committed to the work of HHI. The CHW Coordinator role is crucial as it is the bridge between HHI staff and the CHWs, who are the direct line to our patients. Carlito has thrived as the CHW Coordinator, providing in-the-field training and support for all of the CHWs both in preparation and follow-up for HHI’s Medical Service Trips and throughout the year. Additionally, he manages the HHI pharmacy, medical records, clinical data collection, and serves alongside HHI’s year-round Dominican physician, Dr. Medina, in managing patient care. Carlito’s dedication, professionalism and hard work inspire the rest of the HHI team. Thank you Carlito!



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## Dr. Luis Rosa Sosa is the New Director of Public Health Programs at HHI



As the new Director of Public Health Programs Dr. Luis Rosa Sosa has jumped right in to his new role with HHI. As a medical doctor, medical epidemiologist and an experienced international public health practitioner, he has already contributed a lot in his first month with us. Luis brings valuable experience from working with other international health organizations including MERLIN, Aide Medical International, and Medecins du Monde in the Philippines, Afghanistan, Haiti, and most recently Jordan.

So far, Luis has taken on the lead of HHI's Sano y Feliz expansion, collaborating with the local government and community leaders to do exploration of potential new partner communities for HHI to expand into. He is starting to design the growth of Sano y Feliz together with the Dominican Ministry of Public Health, including planning the baseline study for this project.



Luis is also researching how to bring in the strategy of Motivational Interviewing to HHI's work, since a small pilot of this strategy in the community of Pancho Mateo has proven very successful in bringing about healthy behavior change. As part of his new role as the Director of Public Health Programs Luis will be leading the new project funded by the World Diabetes Foundation. We are so happy that Luis chose to return to the Dominican Republic to work with HHI. Welcome to HHI Luis!

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## In September HHI Carried off Another Successful Series of Field Clinics

As part of our Clinical Programs, HHI organizes primary health care field clinics three times per year in order to follow up with the patients in our Chronic Care Program (who have diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or epilepsy), and to offer health services to those in need in the communities of Negro Melo, Arroyo de Leche, Severet, and Pancho Mateo. In September, HHI facilitated the medical volunteer services of



Drs. Craig Czarsty (HHI Board Chair), Brad Wilkinson (HHI Vice-Chair), Geetika Gupta, and Otto Weis, as well as APRN Edee Vassar, and nurses Melanie Murphy and Kelly Herlihy. We also had the help of HHI Board member Chris Meelia, who wrote a moving [blog post](#) upon returning to the United States. Thanks to this wonderful group of volunteers, HHI's permanent volunteer group of Community Health Workers, and the HHI staff, we were able to provide quality medical services to 298 people.

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## HHI Participates in World Diabetes Day Walk in Puerto Plata and Community Health Workers Lead Their Own Walk in Pancho Mateo



The whole HHI team got moving in honor of World Diabetes Day on November 14. We joined leaders from the Provincial hospital, Ricardo Limardo and the Santiago Diabetes Institute in Puerto Plata to spread the word about diabetes and how it can

be prevented. This year's key message was about eating a healthy breakfast. HHI Community Health Workers also held their own successful walk in Pancho Mateo.

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## HHI Receives a \$25,000 Matching Grant Challenge



This matching grant will allow supporters of HHI to double their impact by matching any new or increased donation up to \$25,000. For every dollar that you give to HHI we will receive two, effectively doubling the amount that we are able to help people access quality health care services in the Dominican Republic. Thank you for supporting Health Horizons International to improve community health in the Dominican Republic, and have a Happy Thanksgiving!

Here is another way to support HHI! As you shop for the holidays on Amazon use AmazonSmile. When you do your Holiday shopping at AmazonSmile, Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price to Health Horizons International Foundation Inc. Bookmark [this link](#) and support us every time you shop.



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Your contribution will enable us to provide medication, preventive health care services, and specialty medical care to families living in poverty. It will also support on-going efforts to build community health through our year-round community health workers program, medical service trips, and diverse public health programs.

Please considering making a donation today to support our cause.

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**Our mission is to improve community health by building local capacity for quality primary care and public health.**



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