

The clubs in action

The greatest gift of all

Milena peeks shyly around her mother as the doctors pore over her medical history and test results. She is only three years old, but Milena is living on borrowed time. The tiny girl was born with two holes in her heart; each day, her heart and circulatory system have to work a little harder to overcome the deficiency. She needs a gift few can give her—the gift of life.

Milena was born in Barranquilla, Colombia. Although Barranquilla is the fourth largest city in the country, with more than six million residents, it does not have a pediatric coronary care center. A number of children are taken to other parts of Colombia or to other countries to receive the care they need, but many never get medical attention.

Milena is one of the lucky few. Rotarians in southeastern Pennsylvania, U.S.A., (R.I. District 7450), in cooperation with Rotarians in northern Colombia (District 4260), facilitated the arrival of a medical team from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, that performed the surgery she desperately needed. The effort, called "Flight for Life" and led by Dr. Pierantonio Russo, was part of the Gift of Life program of District 7450. Rotary clubs, as well as individual Rotarians, financed the trip.

On 14 February 1998, the medical team of 11 set out from Philadelphia. They were accompanied by three District 7450 Rotarians: District Governor Bill Graham, District Governor-nominee Dan Bronson, and Past District Governor Bradley N. Stanton, chair of the district's Gift of Life program. Two days later, Milena and several other patients arrived at the Clinica General del Norte for a final evaluation and preparation for surgery.

For two weeks, the volunteers worked almost around the clock to complete as many surgeries as possible. The team examined countless children, and scheduled three operations a day. Some of the children, such as Milena, walked out of the hospital just days after their surgeries. But the team also had to turn away many of the parents who came to the clinic hoping the doc-



A Colombian girl recovers from open-heart surgery performed by a medical team from R.I. District 7450 in Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

tors would be able to grant their children a second chance at life.

In January 1999, the Gift of Life team returned to Barranquilla on a second Flight for Life mission. During the two visits, they completed a total of 35 open-heart surgeries. If the patients had paid for these operations, volunteers estimate that they would have cost more than \$5 million—a small sum when compared to the value of a young life.

Project leaves buckets brimming

Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water. For years, the words of the popular nursery rhyme struck much too close to home for children of Barangay Old Kawayan, a village in Leyte, Philippines. Every day, the community's youngest members had to trudge up a hill on the outskirts of town, dragging behind them plastic water jugs strung together with frayed rope. Once they reached the spring on the other side, they would fill each container and begin an arduous trek back to their homes.

In August 1998, the Rotary Club of San Juanico-Tacloban devised a plan to make transporting water much easier for the youngsters. Members traveled to the village of Barangay Old Kawayan, where they initiated "Potable Water—Way to a Healthy Life," a Matching Grant project made possible

through a joint effort with the Rotary Club of Goldsboro, North Carolina, U.S.A.

The San Juanico-Tacloban club oversaw the installation of an electric water pump, a stainless steel water storage tank, pipeline, and faucets. With the new equipment,



Children in Barangay Old Kawayan fill containers at a water station made possible by the Rotary Club of San Juanico-Tacloban, Philippines.